LOUISA;

OR, THE

COTTAGE ON THE MOOR.

A NEW EDITION corrected, with ADDITIONS.

LOUISA;

OR, THE

COTTAGE ON THE MOOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

——— "Ye good diſtreſt!
"Ye noble few! who here unbending ſtand
"Beneath life's preſſure; yet bear up awhile;
"And what your bounded view, which only ſaw
"A little part, deem'd evil, is no more!
"The ſtorms of wintry time will quickly paſs,
"And one unbounded ſpring encircle all."

DUBLIN:

Printed for the PROPRIETORS, 1787.

LOUISA;

OR, THE

COTTAGE ON THE MOOR.

CHAP. XII.

LOUISA's STORY—CONTINUED.

Periſh the Lover, whoſe imperfect flame
Forgets one feature of the Nymph he lov'd.

SHENSTONE's ELEGY.

SURPRISE for ſome time took from me the power of utterance: tears at length coming to my aſſiſtance, I endeavoured, by entreaties and expoſtulations, to perſuade him to take

take me back; but in vain; for he was continually calling to the poſt-boy to quicken his pace.——Finding gentle methods fail, I reproached him in the bittereſt terms; nor did I ſpare Mrs. Maſters, whom I looked upon as his confederate. "Nay, ſtop there," ſaid he, ſmiling: "I muſt exculpate her from any ſhare in the buſineſs: the cloak and calaſh I contrived to ſteal, and ſincerely believe ſhe will be as little pleaſed with the affair as yourſelf: but time, my dear girl, will, I hope, procure my pardon; and a whole life, ſpent in aſſiduity and tenderneſs, efface my fault, and obtain, even from that obdurate heart, a gentle return of affection." To this I returned no anſwer, well knowing words were uſeleſs; and the road, as well as I could diſcern, being very lonely, made me conjecture ſcreams would be the ſame.

We travelled, as I ſuppoſe, two hours and a half, from our firſt departure from the inn; when the deteſted man, perceiving I was faint, apologized for taking me ſo far without ſtopping; adding, "half an hour more will

will end our journey, and bring us to a houſe, of which you ſhall be the abſolute miſtreſs."

At this declaration, all hope forſook me; as I had imagined, that now morn began to break, we might fortunately meet ſome paſſengers, to whom I might make my ſituation known. Deprived of what I thought my only reſource, my fears overpowered me, and I ſunk ſenſeleſs to the bottom of the chaiſe. How long I continued in this ſtate, I cannot tell. Danvers, however, from my ſituation, thought it neceſſary to let down the window, and ſupport me in his arms. By the help of the air I ſoon recovered. As to Danvers, he was ſo loſt in his attention to my recovery, that it prevented his noticing two horſemen who paſſed the chaiſe.—— As I knew this would be my laſt opportunity, I exerted my utmoſt ſtrength, and ſcreamed with the greateſt violence. Danvers, to whom this was unexpected, (as I fancy he thought me hardly capable of ſo much exertion) haſtily drew up the window, curſing his own tenderneſs and my counterfeit

terfeit ſwooning (as he was pleaſed to term it.) Notwithſtanding his efforts to hinder it, I redoubled my cries; and a moment after, heard a voice, deſiring the driver to ſtop, and inform him of the occaſion of thoſe ſcreams. Danvers, letting down the window, with dreadful imprecations ordered the lad to proceed; but the perſon who firſt called, was not to be moved from his purpoſe, as I continued begging for help and protection; and the gentleman enforced his commands to the poſt-boy with a cocked piſtol in his hand. Danvers now loſt all patience, and fired at the gentleman, but fortunately miſſed him. It pleaſed heaven, as he drew out one piſtol, I ſaw the end of another; and with an effort of courage, more than I thought I poſſeſſed, haſtily ſeized, and threw it out of the front window, almoſt at the ſame moment Danvers fired; which encreaſed his rage to ſuch a degree, that I believe, at the inſtant, he would have ſacrificed me as well as my deliverer, who ſtill held his piſtol in his hand, without attempting to fire. This forbearance

bearance was, I ſuppoſe, occaſioned by his humanity to me, who, ſhut up in the chaiſe, ſtood an equal chance for death with Danvers. He, now baffled in his project, called haſtily to his ſervant to bring his fire-arms: this was alſo prevented, by the lacquey's horſe taking fright at the firing, and overturning his rider in the dirt. The unworthy Danvers, being acquainted with this freſh diſaſter, and finding nothing further was to be obtained by violence, inſiſted to the ſtranger that I was his ſiſter, and had eloped with his valet-de-chambre; that, purſuing us to Dover, he luckily overtook us, as we were about to embark for Calais. I did not give him time to proceed; but, with the little ſtrength this horrid ſcene had left me, leaped from the carriage, and, falling on my knees, entreated the ſtranger's protection as far as Dover, where a lady was, who had the care of me: that I was juſt come from France, and was going to my friends in the north of England: in ſhort, I told him, as well as I could, how I had been betrayed. The ſtranger did not give me time

time to finiſh; but leaping from his horſe, raiſed me; then, turning to Danvers told him he ſhould conduct me back to Dover; that, if what he had advanced was true, in relation to my being his ſiſter, he was welcome to return with us on his horſe, as he himſelf ſhould accompany me in the chaiſe. Danvers, who only regarded this offer as an inſult, replied, "You may chance to buy this victory dear; let me know your name and place of reſidence, that I may repay the favours conferred on me."—"As to reſidence," replied the ſtranger, "I have not any; neither can my name be of ſervice, as I do not mean to give you an opportunity of endeavouring to take my life, merely for preventing your being guilty of an act of violence and injuſtice. I am ever thankful to Providence, in making me the means to ſuccour innocence: however, I do not pride myſelf in your defeat; therefore, were I even well aſſured the event of a meeting you ſeem to wiſh, would be in my favour, of this be certain, (whatever ſignification the man of modern honour may give it) I never

never will put it in my power to ſend ſo unprepared a ſoul into the preſence of its Maker." Saying this, he aſſiſted me in getting into the chaiſe; then followed, himſelf; peremptorily ordering the driver to take me from whence I came, and his own ſervant to lead his horſe, and follow the chaiſe. We then departed, leaving Danvers ſtamping on the ground with rage.

I returned the Stranger thanks, as well as the commotion of my ſpirits would permit: he, loſt in thought, his eyes fixed on my face, with features that bore ſtrong marks of grief, made no reply. Fearing he had received ſome hurt in the late rencontre, I entreated to know if he was well: diſturbed from this reverie, he anſwered, "Perfectly ſo: my abſence was occaſioned by your extreme likeneſs to an angel, who for a ſhort time bleſſed the earth; heaven, who ſaw her poſſeſſed of a larger ſhare of virtues than belong to the human race, ſnatch'd her to her native ſkies." As he ſpoke, ſenſibility and manhood ſtrove for maſterſhip; tenderneſs prevailed—a tear eſcaped.

He then aſked me my name and family, and to what part of England I was going: I told him, as briefly as I could, that I was an orphan, had ſpent the beſt part of my life in France and now for the firſt time in my remembrance, was going to ſee my guardian. I was interrupted by the poſt-boy, who ſtopped to inform us he found it impoſſible to make the horſes proceed much further, as they were much fatigued; and intreated us to change at an inn about a quarter of a mile diſtant. The ſtranger conſented, and we reached the place. On my getting out of the chaiſe, I found myſelf unable to walk, and relapſed into a ſecond fainting: my generous protector immediately ordered me to loſe ſome blood, and to be put to bed; that himſelf would go to Dover, and inform the lady I left there, of what had happened; that he would then return, and bid me farewell.

But, alas! this was our final parting; never ſince have I ſeen him. Great as were my obligations, a ſomething beyond even that, endeared him. Perhaps my own heart, rent with painful feelings, ſympathiſed with one whoſe

whoſe ſenſibility ſeemed yet greater than my own. He appeared about the age of forty; or melancholy had marked him with more years than he had numbered.

A few hours brought Mrs. Maſters to me, breathing bitter wiſhes againſt her former favourite; though I ſincerely believe ſhe found his inconſtancy to herſelf more heinous than any other fault. "To make me," ſaid ſhe, "a convenience, a blind! ſure never was any thing ſo provoking: had I been old or ugly, I could have pardoned it; and, fool like, I have told him your guardian's name; ſo I ſuppoſe we ſhall be plagued with him there.'

I knew it was in vain to reproach her with imprudence, and only aſked where was the generous man to whom I was ſo much obliged? "Where is he!" ſaid ſhe: "why, gone about his buſineſs, to be ſure. I think we have had enough of male companions: I will take care no more ſhall be with us: he would fain have bid you farewell; but I thanked him for his trouble, and made an excuſe for ſeeing him any more."

" Merciful God! is this the way you return thanks for ſuch obligations in this country? Would to heaven I had remained in that peaceful ſpot where I paſſed my infant years! Short as my abode with the world has been, I have been obliged to treat the man I deteſted, with reſpect, and him to whom I owe more than life, with ingratitude."

" Had you informed me, miſs," returned ſhe, " you had any reaſon to diſlike Mr. Danvers, all this might have been prevented."

" True, Madam; but your want of confidence in me muſt excuſe mine; as you truſted Mr. Danvers with what you did not deſign to inform me, the name and family of my guardian." Whether ſhe ſaw her imprudence in its proper colours, I do not know; but ſhe made no anſwer.

The next morning we ſet off, but made no ſtay when we reached London; which made me conjecture, that her original deſign of ſtaying a night there was in compliment to her fallen favourite.

As we advanced on our road to the north, ſhe grew more communicative,

and

and ſaid, had ſhe not fooliſhly told Danvers my guardian's title, (who, ſhe now informed me, was the Earl of Danford) ſhe would not have mentioned the runaway ſcheme; but as, in all probability, Danvers would apply to him, 'twere better the ſecret came from us. As ſhe ſeemed better humoured than uſual, I was careful not to appear as if I thought this caution was for her own ſake; but intreated her, now I was in my own country, to inform me if my parents had no relations to whom I might pay my duty. "Your mother," ſaid ſhe, "died ſoon after you was born: for relations, look on Lord Danford as the neareſt you poſſeſs; but be careful not to let him think you know it, as it would be of no ſervice to you, and ruin me for betraying the truſt repoſed in me."

I thanked her, and promiſed the moſt profound ſecreſy. Though my eyes were ready to overflow, I conſtrained my tears till I had a moment alone; then, throwing myſelf on my knees, "Almighty Father!" ſaid I, "protect an innocent child, whom a parent bluſhes to own; for ſurely that is the ſecret

ſo carefully concealed." Alas! I knew I was a child of ſorrow; but am I alſo one of ſhame? My unhappy Mother, too, paid dear for the fatal tranſgreſſion: had ſhe been ſpared, we would have wandered from a cenſorious world, where the duty of the child that marked her fall ſhould have brought peace and comfort to her declining years.

The ſervant of the inn informed me the chaiſe waited; and I immediately joined Mrs. Maſters, who obſerved I had been weeping, and deſired me to leave off thoſe vapouriſh humours; for, continued ſhe, "Lord Danford is ſuch an enemy to melancholy, that if he only finds himſelf inclined to think, he immediately diſſipates it by company or wine." "Alas," returned I, "the time will come when even thoſe will be of no avail." "Oh, Child!" (exclaimed ſhe, interrupting me) "a truce with your religion, I conjure you; we are all as good as we can."

We travelled four days poſt, at the end of which time we reached Danford caſtle. In driving up the avenue, it is impoſſible to paint the various agitations I felt: reſpect, affection, duty, fear,

fear, alternately poſſeſſed me; for I had ſtrongly perſuaded myſelf, from Mrs. Maſters's method of ſpeaking, Lord Danford muſt be my father. The ſight of a long-abſent daughter, thought I, will awake nature, ſo long dormant in his boſom; and I ſhall forget their painful ſecrecy in the arms of a parent.

Vain, flattering hope; how many painful hours doſt thou ſmooth over with pleaſing expectation!

We reached the gate—a large bell gave notice of our approach—the door opened—I entreated the favour of Mrs. Maſters's ſalts, by the help of which I followed her to the houſe: on entering which, I found ſhe muſt be a perſon of ſome account, by the deference paid her by ſeveral domeſtics who attended. "Where is my Lord?" ſaid ſhe: „does he know I am arrived?" No, "Madam," replied the ſervant; "but I will inform him of it immediately." "No," ſaid ſhe, "I will ſurprize him myſelf." So ſaying, ſhe made a ſlight apology for leaving me, and ordered the man to ſhew me to a parlour.

CHAP. XIII.

LOUISA's STORY—CONCLUDED.

——Now the diſtemper'd mind
Has loſt that concord of harmonious powers,
Which forms the ſoul of happineſs; and all
Is of the poiſe within: the paſſions all
Have burſt their bounds; and reaſon half extinct
Or impotent, or elſe approving, ſees
The foul diſorder.

THOMSON's SEASONS.

I REMAINED an hour alone before Mrs. Maſters returned; who, then deſiring me to follow her, we paſſed through ſeveral magnificent apartments, before we reached that in which was ſeated Lord Danford.——"Miſs Villars, my Lord," ſaid Mrs. Maſters. His

His eyes momentarily met mine; but ſtarting, and changing of a ghaſtly paleneſs, he haſtily removed them, as from an object whoſe ſight was obnoxious.

"Give me leave, my Lord," ſaid I, bending my knee, "to return my thanks for your goodneſs, ſo many years, to a friendleſs girl, who, though her words may ill expreſs her gratitude, yet by her actions, I hope, will give you no reaſon to repent your generoſity."

"Riſe, Child," ſaid he; the deadly pale giving way to burning crimſon; you owe me no thanks, nor can I at preſent receive you as I ought."

The Earl was a handſome man, apparently between fifty and ſixty; of a commanding air, and an eye ſo penetrating, that when I found it fixed on me, I ſhrunk, as conſcious of ſome defect. Though my confuſion was great, the Earl's was equal; and three days paſſed before our looks could meet without a viſible confuſion on his ſide.

How amiable, thought I, is the Earl's diſorder, on being reminded by the innocent proof of a long expiated fault! yet how painful to a feeling heart, to think a parent views us with repentant eyes!

A few days wore off Lord Danford's gravity, and conquered my timidity. I ſtudied his temper with the greateſt aſſiduity, calling forth every little talent I poſſeſſed, to amuſe him. I ſung to him, read to him; and, as he uſually lay on the ſopha an hour after dinner, he begged me to appropriate that time to the harpſichord; and I was ſoon convinced he regarded me not only with an eye of friendſhip, but affection. Happy as I thought myſelf to gain ground in Lord Danford's eſteem, yet I felt ſenſibly hurt at ſome little familiarities that paſſed between him and Mrs. Maſters, as it gave me room to think his conduct not ſo irreproachable as I at firſt believed.

One evening, as we were ſitting after ſupper, "Well, Louiſa," ſaid he; "has that gentle heart of thine forgiven Danvers? Nay do not bluſh, for Maſters has told me all. Could he have

have applied to me honourably before I ſaw you, I ſhould readily have cloſed with his offer; but at preſent, I believe you muſt be arbitreſs of your own fate." As he ſpoke, he laid his hand on mine: I returned my thanks by preſſing it to my lips. "You little enchantreſs!" continued he, returning my compliment, "I was determined to diſlike you; how have you forced me to the oppoſite extreme!"

I expreſſed a wiſh to inform Madame Du Saint, and the Counteſs of Melville, I was happy. The Earl of Danford informed me Lord Melville was at Bath; that himſelf ſhould go there in a few weeks; I ſhould accompany him, and agreeably ſurpriſe my friends. As I had determined his word ſhould be law, I acquieſced; but wrote, by his permiſſion, to the abbeſs; yet I have never received an anſwer.——The ſervant, one day, delivered him ſome letters that came by the poſt; on reading the ſuperſcription of one he turned pale, his hand trembled, and it was ſome time before he could open it. Whether he was

ſenſible

ſenſible of this alteration in himſelf, I do not know; but he deſired me to retire, and return in half an hour.

"I have had a letter particularly diſpleaſing to me, Louiſa," ſaid he, when I came back, "as it puts me to the diſagreeable neceſſity of parting with you for ſome ſhort time: but you ſhall not go far diſtant, nor yet muſt your abſence be long: I ſhall feel it too ſeverely.——Maſters ſhall go firſt, and prepare for your reception: I will conduct you to your retreat myſelf; it is not more than ſix miles; and, miſer-like, I ſhall daily ſteal time to viſit my treaſure."

I aſked him when it was his pleaſure I ſhould depart. "Oh, there is no hurry," returned he; "we are ſafe for this week, I believe. I have ſome wild young fellows coming to pay me a viſit; am I not merciful to hide ſo dangerous a creature as you are?"

Had the compliments I received from Lord Danford proceeded from any other perſon, I ſhould have heard them with diſguſt; but, perſuaded they came from a parent, whoſe growing

partiality

partiality would one day own me without bluſhing, ſelf-love prevailed; and the ſudden tranſition my appearance had made in the Earl, from averſion to affection, almoſt made me think I deſerved them.

Mrs. Maſters received the news of her journey with apparent diſguſt: though ſhe did not venture to diſſent from the Earl, yet her looks plainly indicated, that her words, had ſhe given them vent, would not have been of the moſt pleaſing ſort.

Our adieus were ſhort: my Lord was to conduct me to her in three days; never did I ſee him ſo cheerful as at her departure; and the day paſſed with every appearance of pleaſure on his ſide, and every deſire of pleaſing on mine.

The following day paſſed equally gladſome. Twenty times did I watch the motion of his lips, expecting him to throw off the painful maſk, and own himſelf my father. Alas! how bitter the diſappointment? When he, as uſual, after dinner, reclined to the ſopha, I took my place at the harpſichord. "Do not play to-day, Louiſa,"

ſa," ſaid he; "your voice is more melodious than the inſtrument: ſo ſit by me and amuſe me with that; and, in return, I will tell you a ſecret.—— But firſt, can you forgive the neglect you have been treated with ſo many years?——a neglect which nothing, not even my whole fortune, can expiate." I did not give him leave to continue. "Do not, my Lord," ſaid I, "rend my heart by aſking me to forgive; rather let me ſpend my life in eraſing any ill impreſſion you might formerly conceive of me: bleſſed with your approbation, I remember nothing but your goodneſs and my own unworthineſs."

"Sweet girl! then let me ſeal my pardon by preſſing to my heart the only delight it has felt ſo many years: yes, Louiſa, from your birth until theſe few weeks, never have I known pleaſure; it again dawns on my ſoul, and in thy arms ſhall I find it realiſed." So ſaying, he embraced me with an ardour ſo far from pleaſing, that my heart, which the moment before had almoſt ſprung to meet him, ſhrunk

to

to her native ſeat, overcome with fear and confuſion.

" What is the matter, my ſweet girl? ſaid he, ſeeing I trembled; " do you repent your gentle forgiveneſs?"—" No, my Lord; but tell me, I beſeech you, *whom* I ſhould forgive? In this poſture," ſaid I, kneeling before him, " let me intreat you to diſcloſe the promiſed ſecret, and diſpel the miſt that overwhelms me."

" Whom," ſaid he again, preſſing me to his arms, " but your lover, whoſe heart, life, and fortune, are yours."

" Good heavens!" repeated I, faultering, and riſing from my humble poſture: " What do you mean, my Lord?"

" Mean!" returned he; " I mean, you have too long been dependant; henceforward, miſtreſs of my fortune, I aſk but to live in your ſmiles, and repoſe on that ſoft boſom." As he ſpoke, he again attempted to take me in his arms; but, avoiding his embrace, " Why, my Lord," ſaid I, " do you force me to forget the obligations you have conferred on me, and oblige me to tell you, I deſpiſe your fortune

fortune equally with the infamous means by which you would have me obtain it?"

My agitation was ſo great, that I know not what anſwer he made; for he again caught me in his arms, and, notwithſtanding my cries, attempted liberties I ſhall ever bluſh to think of.

" Forbear, my Lord," ſaid I, " unleſs you mean to add my death to your other crimes, (catching the ſciſſars from the tambour-frame that ſtood by the ſopha); for I will ſooner deprive myſelf of life than be the wretch you would have me."

Whether he thought my words greater than my courage, I know not; but he would have proceeded in his infamous intent. In that moment of horror, raiſing my hand, I attempted a blow at my breaſt; but haſtily throwing his arm around my neck, he received the ſtroke. As he bled extremely, it obliged him inſtantly to loſe me; though ſwearing I ſhould not eſcape him.

" Nor will you," ſaid I, " eſcape the vengeance of that power who this night directed my hand.—Think, my Lord; awake from this delirium. Ought not the

the relationſhip I hold to you deter you, if neither honour nor virtue can?"

"Relationſhip!" repeated he; his looks becoming paler than even the wound he had occaſioned; "What wretch told you ſo?—But begone, girl, and dread my revenge." As he ſpoke, he threw me the key of the door; which, till that time, I knew not was locked.

I inſtantly quitted the chamber, and the moment after heard him violently ring the bell for aſſiſtance, as I ſuppoſe, to dreſs the wound. Great as were my terrors at this moment, a fear of ſtill greater inſult determined me immediately to quit the houſe as privately as poſſible, before he had time for recollection, as he then might uſe means to prevent it.

I deſcended by a pair of back-ſtairs to the garden; which, croſſing, I reached a little door that opened to the road; then, commending myſelf to that Power that had hitherto protected me, I began my weary walk.

The night was clear and froſty; the moon ſhone bright: all was perfectly ſerene,

ſerene, except, between whiles, the ſcreams of owls, which broke on the ſtillneſs of the night, and gave freſh ſpeed to my trembling ſteps.

I meaſured ſome miles before my fears gave me time to recollect; I knew not where I was wandering; and the cloaths I had on were my all. (I had that day been out with Lord Danford, which occaſioned my having on my riding-dreſs.) Of money I was not deſtitute, as in my pocket-book was Madame Du Saint's note of fifty pounds, beſides about ten pounds that was left of a ſum Lord Danford preſented me with to dreſs myſelf in the Engliſh faſhion.

For ſome hours I carefully avoided every houſe, ſo great were my fears of being purſued and forced back. But at length, overcome with fatigue, I reſolved to enter the firſt cottage I met with, and enquire my way to ſome town, whence I might get a conveyance to London, and meet with Lady Melville.

But, alas! I was already on the moor. In vain did I ſtrain my ſight to diſcern a light burning in ſome cot,

to

to direct my weary ſteps. Several times was I on the point of ſinking on the ground, overcome with fatigue, and benumbed with cold; and when I reached this little manſion, had not your humanity received me, a ſhort time muſt have reduced me to a lifeleſs frozen corpſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

A LETTER—A SEPARATION.

—Come, ye generous minds, in whoſe wide thought,
Of all his works, *creative Bounty* burns
With warmeſt beam; and on your open front
And liberal eye, ſits, from his dark retreat
Inviting modeſt want.

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

LOUISA ceaſed; and received the thanks of Mrs. Rivers. "But you cannot ſtill think this wicked man to be your father?" ſaid ſhe, "ſome fatal truth lurks under this veil of ſecrecy: but degrade not nature ſo far, as

as to think it produces ſo ſhocking a monſter. It is more probable you are really an orphan, that ſhould poſſeſs more than he likes to part with; for what Maſters ſaid might only be to prevent queſtions."

"I ſhould be entirely of your opinion," returned Louiſa, "but the viſible horror he underwent, at the bare mention of relationſhip, half confirmed the dreadful ſurmiſe." "Dreadful indeed," replied the lady: "but baniſh the idea: you ſhall write to Lady Melville, and inform her of your misfortunes; ſhe may aſſiſt you in making Lord Danford ſolve this myſtery. In the mean time, ſecure in my cottage, you ſhall poſſeſs all the affection I have to beſtow."— Of how much good is ſeeming ill productive! —"Could I have believed I ſhould bleſs the hour I wandered, almoſt periſhing on the Moor!" ſaid Louiſa; "yet that is the caſe; for the troubles of the ſearch are loſt, in the treaſure I have found."

Louiſa, by the advice of her friend, wrote to Lady Melville (as ſhe knew her London reſidence) an account of what

what had happened to her ſince ſhe quitted the convent. At the ſame time, ſhe informed her, ſhe was now entirely out of the Earl's power. "And could I," ſaid ſhe, "remove the melancholy that preys on my benefactreſs, and pierce the veil of obſcurity that ſurrounds myſelf, I were perfectly happy."

Though Louiſa mentioned her friend, it was not by name; as that lady deſired her to omit it, as ſhe would have no trace by which Mr. Rivers, if he yet lived, might know ſhe exiſted.

"If my Henry's fortune," ſaid ſhe, "be recoverable, or Mrs. Rivers's partiality ſhould have remembered me in any bequeſt, he has the moſt right to it: content with what I have, I wiſh not to remind him of ſo unfortunate a creature. Another reaſon, my Louiſa: Lady Melville, prompted by generoſity, may come to fetch you hence; and company, except thoſe whoſe misfortunes lay claim to my humanity, rob me of a portion of time I would otherways employ.

The

The letter was now diſpatched by the old man who officiated as gardener, to put in the poſt at Kendal; at which place the anſwer was to be left.

Six weeks paſſed without any return; but the ſeventh brought the following from her friend Julia.

Spa.

" HOW much have I endured, my dear Louiſa, by your long ſilence! Though relieved from ſuſpenſe, how painfully do I read over what you have ſuffered! What bleſſings are due to the perſon you name your benefactreſs! If the obligation can be repaid with wealth, we will not be ungrateful. If only gratitude can pay the debt, Louiſa and her Julia will ſtudy through life to diſcharge it.

" You will, no doubt, wonder at our being at Spa: we attended my father here two months ſince; and, at the receipt of yours, we had the misfortune to have loſt him eight days. Auguſtus joined us, ſome time before his death; and the parent, whoſe

whoſe ſeverity we dreaded in his life, by his parting tenderneſs has given us laſting reaſon to lament. We ſhall be in England nearly as ſoon as this letter. Lady Melville entreats you will favour her with your company; for which purpoſe ſhe will ſend the chaiſe to Kendal, to conduct you. And would the lady to whom you are ſo much obliged, favour us likewiſe, the obligation would be double. She is melancholy. Ours is not the houſe of joy. Lady Melville ſhall ſympathiſe with her; and her grateful Louiſa and Julia will force her to give their young hearts a portion of ſorrow, which, when divided, will be the eaſier endured.

"As I once offended you by pleading the cauſe of a lover, I promiſe to offend no more: the reaſon I will inform you of when we meet: till when, believe me impatient

"JULIA."

P. S. As you have not ſent a direction to your habitation, the chaiſe will

will be at the principal inn in Kendal on the firſt of March."

"I am extremely pleaſed with your amiable friend," ſaid Mrs. Rivers; "yet a ſelfiſh thought almoſt riſes, to wiſh you was entirely my own." —"And, after ſuch a wiſh, my dear Madam," returned Louiſa, "can I ever leave you, to whom I owe my preſervation? No; Lady Melville is generous, and, when ſhe is acquainted how happily I am ſituated, will not wiſh me pained by leaving it."

"Nor will I, for ſo ſelfiſh a conſideration, impriſon you amongſt thoſe deſolate hills. Believe me, my child, this journey will be productive of good. Lady Melville's partiality will ſeek into the ſecret of your birth; which divulged, may remove the cloud that hangs on modeſt merit, unaccompanied by wealth. If that ſhould be the caſe, I do not bid you remember me; your goodneſs of heart needs not that caution. I know you will ſometimes think of the cottage, and the boſom that feels for you almoſt maternal tenderneſs; and, as I own a

parent fondneſs, the care of that character muſt not be wanting. Mary ſhall go to Kendal, and buy things to equip you the beſt we can. Accompanied by her, you ſhall meet your friends at the appointed time, to whoſe care ſhe muſt reſign you."

Louiſa's thanks were better expreſſed in her eyes than by words. But as I make no doubt every one of my fair readers has experienced the heartfelt ſatisfaction of ſeeing eyes beam gratitude through tears, I ſhall not attempt to deſcribe what can only be felt. But, in caſe any of thoſe fair ones to whom I appeal ſhould be unacquainted with the raptures of gratitude from a feeling mind, I conjure them to haſten to do a benevolent action. The ſenſation it leaves, will ſpread a brighter glow on the complexion, than milk of roſes, or bloom of Circaſſia.

Mary performed her miſtreſs's promiſe; and the next evening returned from Kendal, attended by the old man, bearing the materials for dreſs. As there did not happen to be either mantua-maker or milliner nearer than

the

the above-mentioned town, the ladies were forced to officiate in thoſe capacities themſelves: indeed nature had decorated them ſo abundantly, as to make faſhion needleſs; and a ſtraw hat ſat as becomingly on the artleſs looks of Louiſa, as a balloon or parachute bonnet on the tortured head of a modern belle.

The morning now arrived which was to part our friends, whom the cement of kindred minds united in bonds ſo ſtrong, as to make the ſeparation painful. At length, however, they ſighed their adieus; and Louiſa, with ſlow ſtep, and an eye oft caſt back, loſt ſight of the friendly cottage.

CHAP. XV.

A MEETING.

All nature fades extinct: and she alone
Heard, felt, and seen, possesses every thought,
Fills every sense, and pants in every vein.

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

MARY interrupted her reverie, by fearing she would be fatigued before they reached Kendal. "No, indeed, my dear Mrs. Bennet," said she, "you forget how far I must have wandered the night you received me: were I returning to Mrs. Rivers, the way might appear long; but at present, my steps seem to move me too quickly away."

They

They reached the appointed place in ſafety, where the old man (as he was on horſeback for the ſake of carrying the baggage) was arrived before them.

" Can you inform me, Madam," ſaid Mary, addreſſing the landlady, " if a carriage of the Counteſs of Melville's is here ?"

" The Earl and his ſiſter arrived laſt night, Madam," returned ſhe ; " I preſume you are the lady they expect: give me leave to ſhew you to the parlour ; you are waited for with impatience."

The landlady led the way, and the next moment ſaw our young friends in each others arms : indeed their raptures were ſo great, that Louiſa overlooked Auguſtus, (now Lord Melville ;) but, bluſhing, ſhe acknowledged her error ; claiming for excuſe, ſhe had no idea of meeting them ; being honoured far above her merits by the Counteſs's ſending the chaiſe.

" And could you, my dear Miſs Villars," ſaid he, " imagine my mother would ſuffer you to travel ſo far alone, when her ſon and daughter were

ſo proud of the charge? Are you ſo apt to forget your friends, that you think they can be ſo unmindful of you?"

"I ſhall ever remember Lady Melville's kindneſs and your politeneſs, my Lord: but give me leave, Lady Julia, to preſent my friend. To her, and one more lady, how much am I obliged! with them I almoſt forgot my misfortunes; and, had not a wiſh to know of the welfare of Lady Melville and my dear Julia interfered, never would I have changed it."

"A truce with your introduction," ſaid Julia; "while you were paying your compliments, I was ſhewing the advantage of a French education, and introducing myſelf. I have told her how much I am obliged, how much I love her, in half the time you would have given to bluſhes and ſentimental thanks. For this lady, (taking Mary by the hand,) I have a right to ſome of her affection, as I freely give you up a third of my mother's: that return will keep up the balance."

"My dear young lady," returned Mary, "it is not to me any thanks

are due, but to my amiable miſtreſs ; to her I will convey them."

In ſhort, our little company were mutually pleaſed with each other ; till ſoon after dinner, Mary reminded Louiſa ſhe muſt bid her farewell, as the walk was long, and the old man ſlow.

" I wiſh not to intrude, Madam," ſaid Lord Melville ; " but permit me to attend you : the chaiſe ſhall ſtop where you pleaſe ; at ſome diſtance from your habitation, if moſt convenient ; and Louiſa will have the ſatisfaction of knowing you got home in ſafety."

Our young friends over-ruled all Mary's objections ; who, after an affectionate farewell, attended by Lord Melville, reached the old man's cottage ; where, after repeated thanks, he bid her adieu.

Julia was not diſpleaſed to be alone with Louiſa, as ſhe wiſhed to be more particularly informed of what had happened ſince their ſeparation ; and likewiſe to repoſe in her boſom a reciprocal confidence.

" About ſix months ago, my dear Louiſa, ſaid ſhe, " my father grew

viſibly worſe, and the gout ſeemed to threaten his ſtomach; we went for change of air and amuſement to ſeveral of the watering-places, and laſtly to Bath; at which place we received a letter from Madame du Saint, which mentioned your removal, and her fears on your account. As I had promiſed Auguſtus to acquaint him with all the news I heard concerning you, I communicated this unwelcome intelligence; and the return of the poſt brought letters from him to my father, to entreat his permiſſion to return home; (like a true knight-errant, I ſuppoſe, to ſeek his miſtreſs). But that very day my father had been adviſed to go to Spa; and, inſtead of the expected permiſſion, my Mother's letters deſired Auguſtus to meet us at that place.

Strict orders were left at the town-houſe, if any letters came, to forward them with all poſſible diſpatch, as we were in continual expectation of hearing from you. Auguſtus joined us three days after our arrival at Spa; but ſo pale, ſo diſpirited, that Lady Melville began to fear almoſt as much for him as my father. Lord Caſtle-

brook

brook came with him to Spa. You know he ſhewed me ſome little attentions at Abbeville: and travelling did not ſeem to have made him forget his former penchant. Whether it was his kindneſs to my brother, or that I feared, being naturally humane, reducing him to a ſimilar ſtate with Auguſtus, I certainly heard him with complaiſance; which he interpreting to his own advantage, one day, in my abſence, made propoſals to Lord and Lady Melville, which ended in his obtaining the Earl's conſent, and my being deſired to receive his viſits. Some days after this, what we dreaded, happened; the gout reached the Earl's ſtomach, and deprived me of a parent. Though Lord Melville was naturally ſevere, and did not make the allowance for youth and inattention which ſome parents can; yet was he poſſeſſed of an excellent heart, and my mother mourned him with unfeigned ſorrow. In this ſtate your letter found us; and in weeping over your troubles we half forgot our own. Though then aſſured of your ſafety, I believe Auguſtus painfully withheld himſelf

from ſetting out poſt for England, which we only reached eight days ſince; that being as ſoon as Lady Melville could travel, who is now not more than a hundred and forty miles from us, at her ſeat in Nottinghamſhire."

"Happy and proud as I am, my dear Julia," ſaid Louiſa, "at Lady Melville's and your partiality for me; I am hurt at your hinting, Lord Melville remembers what I had hopes was quite forgotten: nay, your own letter flattered me it was ſo: you ſaid you would plead no more in his favour; which made me conjecture he had made a worthier choice, and you had ſeen your former imprudence. But never will I wear a diſguiſe with Lady Melville: to her will I diſcloſe all; then retire to my beloved cottage, till Lord Melville, actuated by nobler motives, ſhall do juſtice to himſelf and family." Louiſa would have continued, but a ſuppreſſed ſigh ſhook her voice, and almoſt diſcovered her words did violence to her inclinations.

"And ſo," ſaid Julia laughing, "to anſwer you methodically.—Firſt, you are ſorry my brother ſtill loves you.

you. Pardon me, if I diſbelieve you a little.——Secondly, I promiſed to plead no more for him. Agreed; if ſo handſome a fellow as Auguſtus, with fourteen thouſand a year, cannot plead for himſelf, let him go without for Julia.——Thirdly, you will inform Lady Melville. There, my dear girl, Auguſtus has the advantage of you; he has told already; and the firſt informer has always the beſt of the ſtory.——And fourthly and laſtly, for myſelf, I think it is beſt you treat my brother with lenity, and become my ſiſter, (cuſtomary forms obſerved,) as ſoon as convenient; as that will cut off Danvers's hopes intirely, and prevent him and Auguſtus quarrelling. For Lord Danford, if he dare diſſent, the law ſhall force him to do juſtice.

"And were the whole world to conſent, pardon my pride, Julia," ſaid Louiſa, "never would I give an unknown beggar to the arms of the man I eſteem"

"Well, well," returned Julia, "I know you, and I ſhall never agree on this

this matter; ſo muſt leave you to wiſer heads than mine."

Our young friends now changed the ſubject, and chatted on indifferent matters, till the return of Lord Melville. "I have done myſelf the pleaſure, Miſs Villars," ſaid he, "to attend your friend as far as ſhe would permit: ſhe excuſed herſelf from accepting my company farther, ſaying, the road was impaſſable for a carriage, and the old man was a ſufficient ſafeguard; as vice ſought more frequented paths than thoſe untrodden mountains. Seeing I ſhould oblige her by my abſence, I bid her adieu. But is it poſſible women can aſſume courage enough to live alone in this unfrequented Moor?"

"Very poſſible, my Lord," returned Louiſa: "What have the virtuous to fear? Beſide, the habitation is ſo loſt between the hills, that no one but a wanderer like myſelf could have found it. In the two months that I have been there, never have I ſeen a human creature but thoſe of the cottage where you left Mrs. Bennet: even the butcher that ſupplied

us

us with meat, weekly, left it at that place. My friend, though poſſeſſed of no ſuperfluities, has ever a hand and heart open to the unfortunate: with the happy ſhe has no intercourſe: dead to her friends, ſhe wiſhes to be ſo to all the world. She has honoured me by acquainting me with her misfortunes; yet am I not at liberty to diſcloſe either thoſe, or her name. Suffice it, to ſee her is to admire her, to know her is to love her, and parting from her is painful. So totally is ſhe ſequeſtered, that though ſhe has reaſon to think a good fortune recoverable, ſhe would rather relinquiſh that than mix with the world, to which ſhe has taken ſo bitter a diſtaſte."

"Every bleſſing attend her," returned Lord Melville; "and may ſhe never meet an intruder who venerates her virtues leſs than myſelf!"

Our young friends chatted away the evening, till the clock ſtruck twelve; at which time the ladies wiſhed Lord Melville a good night.

The next morning they began their journey; Julia and Louiſa in the chaiſe, Lord Melville on horſeback, and three ſervants attending. But little paſſed on the way, except affectionate attention on one ſide, and bluſhing on the other. We will paſs over the three days which brought them ſafe to Weſt Park; where Lady Melville received Louiſa in a manner which plainly evinced, merit to her was more eſtimable than gold.

Lord Caſtlebrook became their viſitant ſoon after, not at all to the diſlike of Julia; whoſe tongue, indeed, ſpoke the language of unconcern; whilſt her eyes, directed only by nature, ſparkled with added brightneſs.

For Lord Melville, actuated by an honourable paſſion, he ſought not to diſguiſe it: he viewed Louiſa with admiration, and ſpoke of her with rapture. Nor was Lady Melville leſs partial: ſhe carefully watched her ſon, and young friend; hoping to find mutual affection: but Louiſa, more guarded than Julia, gave no reaſon to ſuppoſe, ſhe felt more than eſteem, except

except now and then a rebel ſigh eſcaped her, at any particular attention paid her by the Earl.

Thus ſituated were our lovers; when the Counteſs, being one day alone with Louiſa, addreſſed her as follows: "I have for ſome time watched you with an enquiring eye, my dear Louiſa: Auguſtus lives but in your preſence; my peace, I own, is centered in his. I have not been able to judge, if you ſee him with the partiality I could wiſh; if you do, I ſhall be happy to embrace, as my daughter, her who already poſſeſſes my affection: if otherwiſe, though diſappointed, believe me, Louiſa, my friendſhip ſhall never leave you."

"My dear Madam," returned Louiſa, "in what manner are you addreſſing a wretched girl, whoſe only pride is her dependence on Lady Melville! You ſay, the Earl's happineſs depends on me——— Ah! Madam, were fortune and birth mine, my heart would quickly make return; or were I only poor, your generoſity would make me forget that: but to have the man I eſteem beyond the whole

whole world, pointed at for marrying a woman who knew not her own parents—believe me, I could not ſupport it."

" Indeed, " Louiſa," returned the Counteſs, " I did not imagine you ſo proud: but Lord Danford ſhall be obliged to own your birth. After ſuch baſe behaviour, he dares not claim you; or, if he ſhould, my intereſt is as great as his. Beſides, you are of an age to chooſe another guardian; which you ſhall do when we remove to town. In the mean time, if you can ſee Auguſtus with partiality, happy with each other, you may ſmile at the world, and deſpiſe its calumny: but, in caſe you do not approve him, I ſhould be ſorry he ſhould nouriſh a paſſion that would imbitter his future days."

" Ah, Madam!" ſaid Louiſa, " pardon me; my heart's above my ſituation; did I poſſeſs worlds, I could be happy to be allied to Lady Melville; but, as it is, how muſt I be wounded to feel myſelf the only blemiſh in an honourable family."

" Think

" Think of this matter at your leiſure, Louiſa," returned Lady Melville; " nor let an over-ſtrained delicacy deprive you of real happineſs. For the preſent, retire; and calm a confuſion viſible in your looks; nor let Auguſtus and Julia gueſs my buſineſs by your diſorder. He muſt be his own advocate; I only mention my wiſhes."

Louiſa did not ſtay for a ſecond permiſſion to retire, but haſtened to her chamber. " Why do my cruel ſtars," ſaid ſhe, " oblige me to refuſe the amiable Lord Melville? Why did we ever meet? My heart already agoniſed, needed no freſh pang; for ſhould I accept his generous offer, may not time diſſolve the charm that blinds his ſenſes? Conſcious of my inequality, I may be content without his affection; but his diſlike would be too hard to bear."

So ruminated Louiſa; till, ſuddenly recollecting herſelf, ſhe determined to acquaint her friend Mrs. Rivers with what had paſt——intreat her counſel, and follow implicitly her opinion. Thus determined,

determined, ſhe immediately wrote to her, directing it, as ſhe had been deſired, (*To Mrs. Bennet, Poſt-houſe, Kendal*). By the time ſhe had finiſhed, her heart beat lighter; and ſhe joined her friends, tolerably compoſed.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

A FRIENDLY LETTER.

What is the world to them,
Its pomp, its pleaſure, and its nonſenſe all!
Who in each other claſp whatever fair
High fancy forms, or laviſh hearts can wiſh?

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

TWO poſts paſſed, but the third brought her the following anſwer.

" My dear child!

" By the ſoft ties of affection, cemented by misfortune, thou art mine, Louiſa, in lieu of her, whom grief deprived

prived of life before ſhe felt the tender preſſure of a parent's arm——before the maternal tear had bedewed, or buſy meddling memory had traced one feature of her loved, loſt father. With ſubmiſſion to the Divine will, ſtill will I look forward to the moment we ſhall be again united; and revere that never-erring providence, whoſe wiſe diſpenſation tranſlated my hapleſs infant from this bitter draught of miſery. Encompaſſed with ſorrow, loſt to the world and its purſuits, how ſhould I have guided her amidſt the ſtormy paths of life! Yet you, Louiſa, have forced me to feel an intereſt beyond the cottage walls. Your welfare oft employs thoughts, and hours, formerly given to contemplation. Your youth, your inexperience, need a guide. Where can you find ſo ſafe a one as in the happineſs that courts you? I know you love Lord Melville: Why make yourſelf voluntarily unhappy by refuſing him? Why plant thorns in the boſoms of Lady Melville, and your friend Julia? I know you have a high ſenſe of favours: Will this be a kind return for thoſe received from

this

this amiable family? One moment's recollection, your ſcruples will vaniſh. By making them happy, you ſeal your own.

" I have no doubt but Lady Melville will oblige your late guardian to diſcover your family; in the knowledge of which, ſhould any circumſtance ariſe that may appear painful, I conjure you to diſpel it: no happineſs is perfect. 'Tis an offence to the Almighty to repine at what cannot be avoided: receive not his preſent bounty with an unthankful heart. Forgive me, my dear Louiſa; I truſt this caution will be unneceſſary: yet I would have you fore-armed, let what will happen. In Lady Melville you will have a mother——in me, a ſympathiſing friend——in Lord Melville, a dearer friend than either. I ſpeak thus candidly, as I feel your happineſs is neceſſary towards maintaining the tranquillity (with ſo much difficulty eſtabliſhed) in my own breaſt. Were you not mutually enamoured of each other I would be the laſt to preſs you to enter a ſtate, which nothing but an union of ſouls can make perfectly happy.

py. The glare of riches is deceitful; and the pleaſures they bring too cloying to be laſting: the chimera ſoon vaniſhes, and leaves the mind whoſe happineſs was built on ſo tranſitory a foundation, to ſeek a new. Diveſt Lord Melville of fortune, he is young, ſenſible, handſome; and, what is ſtill ſuperior, he is virtuous; loves you with unbounded paſſion. You entertain the ſame ſentiments for him. Thus ſituated, had you only enough to procure the conveniencies of life between you, I ſhould be the firſt to adviſe you to let your hand follow your heart. Baniſh then, my ſweet girl, the giant Pride; 'twill ſtride over happineſs; which, when far outſtripped, will caſt a wiſhful look, and heave a then unavailing ſigh. Thus, my loved child, have I given you my ſentiments freely; perhaps you may think too freely: but my heart is my pen; and the future peace of Louiſa ſeems to be the gleam of comfort wanting to the declining hours of

MARIA RIVERS."

Louiſa

Louiſa read her friend's letter with delight, as much for the friendſhip of the writer, as for the advice; which her own heart prompted her to purſue. "Well," ſaid ſhe, kiſſing the letter, and preſſing it to her boſom, "I will think this a mother's permiſſion. Pleaſing idea!——I will be Lord Melville's; and endeavour, by aſſiduity and tenderneſs, to make him forget the diſproportion heaven has placed between us. Yes, generous Auguſtus, I will no longer force my features to wear the cold traits of indifference, but return a paſſion fervent as thine; tempered alone with feminine delicacy and gratitude."

Louiſa's ſoliloquy had probably continued ſome time longer, had ſhe not ſeen, from her window, Lady Melville, attended by her young friends, croſſing a walk at ſome diſtance from the houſe. Haſtily placing her hat, ſhe determined to join them: but they were too diſtant to be immediately overtaken; and the walk being ſerpentine, made the ſearch more difficult. For a while ſhe walked in fruitleſs expectation. At length, turning round a wind-

a winding of this leafy maze, ſhe ſuddenly met Lord Melville alone, his eyes and thoughts deeply fixed on a little portrait, which he ſeemed to view with inexpreſſible tenderneſs. If this ſudden meeting diſconcerted Louiſa, Lord Melville was ſcarcely leſs confuſed; but, returning the miniature to his boſom (which, indeed, appeared its common reſidence, as 'twas fixed there by a ribband), he firſt broke ſilence. "This is unexpected happineſs, my amiable Miſs Villars. My mother deprived herſelf and us of the pleaſure of your company in our walk; as you were, ſhe ſaid, engaged by letters you had juſt received. Accompanied by Julia, ſhe has juſt left me, to viſit ſome poor penſioners. When I parted from them, I had no idea of being ſo greatly compenſated for their abſence." Indeed, my Lord, returned Louiſa, "I did not expect to meet you alone, and am extremely ſorry to break in upon your contemplation." To ſay the truth the fiend Jealouſy, who often lies in wait to give the hearts of lovers a pang, found an avenue in that of Louiſa, where he haſtily entered, and ſhed his baneful

baneful influence. " Am I ever doomed," ſaid Lord Melville, " my deareſt Louiſa, to give you ſorrow in what occaſions me the higheſt rapture! The company of my mother and ſiſter is pleaſing; but yours alone, ſweet maid, would almoſt make me forget the Deity created more than your fair ſelf."

" I fancy," returned Louiſa, " Gentlemen are ſo accuſtomed to compliment, that ſome times they beſtow them indiſcriminately, at the trifling expence of ſincerity."

" Unkind ſurmiſe!" replied he, " when you know I ſhould think my life and fortune cheaply beſtowed, to purchaſe you content!——A fortune, if you refuſe to ſhare, I will abandon. Yes, Louiſa, if you hate me, England, friends, fortune, all, will I leave, accompanied only by one, who, though a faint reſemblance of you, will always cheer my heart with a ſmile."

" I have ever thought it the greateſt misfortune to yourſelf and family, my Lord," ſaid Louiſa, " the partiality with which you have honoured me;

but too dearly ſhould I pay for that partiality, by accepting a divided heart. The face that, perhaps unknowing half your virtues, can always meet you with a ſmile—a ſmile which you own can drive ſorrow from your breaſt——what may it not effect !—— Time will ripen eſteem to love——and you will, I hope, be compleatly bleſt." Louiſa would have continued, but reſtrained ſighs made utterance painful; and ſhe endeavoured to conceal her feelings from her lover, by quitting him: but he, on whom her emotion was not loſt, catching her hand, " you muſt not leave me, Louiſa," ſaid he; " I have never offered you a divided heart. I call heaven to witneſs, I have no happineſs, but what is centered in you; to behold you with rapture when preſent, and contemplate your loved image when abſent; as witneſs, when you met me, who was my companion ?"—So ſaying, he drew the portrait from his boſom, and preſented the image of herſelf.——" Behold, Louiſa," ſaid he, " is there not ſerenity and gentleneſs enough in this angelic face, to baniſh painful feelings,

and

and make the ſoul all harmony? 'Tis plain to a common obſerver. How much more conſpicuous to me, who have hung hours on each feature with increaſing rapture! From the firſt time I ſaw you, I found you ſo eſſential to my peace, that I determined to perſuade the painter, to whom you ſat, to execute two pictures, inſtead of one. He obliged me, and I left Abbeville, triumphing in the ſtratagem by which I poſſeſſed ſo great a treaſure; vainly hoping the time would come, when I might repeat my vows to the original that daily I offered to her ſhrine. Bitter diſappointment!——My paſſion is only endured, as I am the ſon and brother of two much-eſteemed friends."

" You accuſe me unjuſtly," replied Louiſa: " I eſteem Lord Melville, excluſive of the love I bear his mother and ſiſter; and my unhappy proſpects in life are more his enemy than my ſentiments."——" Amiable condeſcenſion! But ſhould I be fortunate enough to clear the ambiguity which gives you ſo much uneaſineſs, may I hope you will ſhare a fortune of no

value to me without your acceptance? Promiſe, ſay you will not reject a man who adores you." ——I know not how to anſwer you, my Lord," returned Louiſa: " Should you be ſucceſsful, and my origin not bring diſgrace with it, I—I"———" Nay, no conditions," interrupted Lord Melville: " on whom would you not confer honour? Baniſh theſe humiliating notions, which I am convinced you will find groundleſs." Julia at this moment made her appearance; perhaps never leſs to the ſatisfaction of her brother, though much to the relief of Louiſa, who began to find her ſituation very awkward; as her tongue ſeemed almoſt to have forgot the leſſons her head had taught it, and acted as auxiliary to her heart " Indeed good folks" (ſaid Julia, laughing), " I think you might have had politeneſs enough to inform me of this aſſignation: I would have brought my Strephon, and made a *partie quarrée*. We might have chimed in altogether ſo prettily, with Love, and Dove, and Dart and Part: but you were ſo ſelfiſh to have only a duet, though you knew my enlivening ſtrains would have

have been of infinite ſervice to the concert."

"The aſſignation, my wild ſiſter, as you are pleaſed to term it, was merely accidental," ſaid Lord Melville; "Miſs Villars came to ſeek you. I was fortunate enough to meet her, and intreat to be her eſcort."

"And you ſought me—every where but where I was to be found. We have been at home this half hour. But, à-propos—— I came to tell you dinner waits. Louiſa, will you never leave off that abominable habit of bluſhing? I am ſhocked to think a French education ſo ill beſtowed; for you have imported as much *mauvaiſe honte*, as though you had been bred in a Northern village all your life; for Heaven's ſake, don't take baſhfulneſs to London with you! I ſhall have you celebrated by the name of The Handſome Villager. If you will but take pattern by me, I have no doubt we ſhall be the *ton* next winter, and reap the inexpreſſible delight of giving the jaundice to every belle that dares oppoſe our conqueſts."

" I had rather, my dear ſiſter," ſaid Lord Melville, " that you would take a leſſon from Louiſa. The Handſome Villager will be a more pleaſing name than The Mortified Coquette, which I fancy is often the fate of your ſiſters of the *ton*."

" Well ſaid, Sir Gravity," replied Julia; " What! you would wiſh to engroſs all our ſmiles? But I ſay, No—Let our charms ſhine at large, and cheer all mankind with their beams."

" I am happy," returned Louiſa, " to think my beams are too weak to ſpread their influence far, as that may prevent the receiving compliments I know not how to anſwer."

" A compliment well aſked, however, child," ſaid Julia. " Pay it for me, Auguſtus; I am not in the humour."

The ladies now accepted each an arm of Lord Melville, and haſtened home to dinner.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

AN OLD FRIEND RECOGNISED AND A CHALLENGE.

——— Senſeleſs, and deform'd,
Convulſive anger ſtorms at large; or pale,
And ſilent, ſettles into fell revenge.
Baſe envy withers at anothers joy,
And hates that excellence it cannot reach.

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

THE time now arrived, when Lady Melville and family were to go to London; a period that Lady had haſtened on purpoſe, to endeavour to be ſatisfied, if poſſible, of the birth of her intended daughter. Our friends travelled for two days. On the ſecond morning, as Louiſa and Julia were obſerving, from the

inn-window, a number of travellers aſcending their different vehicles; a gentleman, who had likewiſe paſſed the night there, received his horſe from the hoſtler; which before he mounted, turning to give ſome orders to his ſervant, Louiſa had a full view of his features. "Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed ſhe; "as I live, the generous ſtranger who reſcued me from Danvers!—Fortunate rencontre! if I have your Ladyſhip's permiſſion," (turning to Lady Melville) "to again thank him, and exculpate myſelf from the thought of ingratitude?"

Lady Melville anſwered by pulling the bell, to order the ſervant to intreat the ſtranger's company; but Auguſtus, with action quick as Louiſa's wiſhes, flew into the court yard, and gracefully moving his hat to the gentleman, who was on the point of departure, intreated his company a moment; as a Lady, to whom he had rendered a ſingular ſervice, begged to ſee him. The ſtranger inſtantly diſmounted, and followed his conductor to the parlour where the Ladies were ſitting, who inſtantly roſe at his appearance. "I hope you will excuſe the liberty we have taken to

detain

detain you, my good Sir," ſaid Lady Melville; "but, when Louiſa recognized you, we could not reſiſt the inclination of returning our thanks."

"And I," continued Louiſa, "could not bear that one to whom I was ſo much obliged, ſhould think I ſo ſoon forgot the favour conferred on me, as to decline bidding you farewell."

"My dear Madam," replied the ſtranger, "you owe me no thanks; the little ſervice I was fortunate enough to render you, is overpaid by ſeeing you in health and ſafety; and the prudence of your companion was perhaps laudable, as I aſked queſtions that might truly be termed impertinent."

"The obligations conferred on me," anſwered Louiſa, "and the ſituation from which you reſcued me, might ſurely claim an anſwer to any queſtion you would aſk."

The ſtranger bowed an acknowledgement; and the converſation became univerſal.

"If you journey towards London, Sir, we ſhall be much honoured by ſuch an addition to our company," ſaid Lady Melville.

" The honour is conferred on me," ſaid the ſtranger; " and I accept it with pleaſure. My ſtay in London will be ſhort, as I only paſs through there in my return to the Continent. I have already remained longer in England than I at firſt purpoſed; but the ſituation in which I found a near relation, prevented my departure, and kept me in a kingdom which nothing but the commands of a dying friend could have forced me to reviſit."

" Yet you are an Engliſhman?" ſaid Lord Melville. " I am, and glory in the name," replied he; " yet in it I loſt all that could make any country dear to me: ſince which, I have conſtantly avoided it. When I firſt met your young friend, I was juſt arrived. The ſtriking reſemblance ſhe bears to a perſon whoſe memory is very dear to me, induced me to aſk her conductreſs queſtions, which I believe prevented my ſeeing her again; as,—— to what part of England ſhe was going? —what fortune ſhe poſſeſſed? (having herſelf informed me ſhe was an orphan). The freedom I uſed, met with its reproof; for ſhe civilly thanked me for

for my trouble (as ſhe termed it)—aſſured me your habitation was far diſtant—your fortune affluent—and henceforward her vigilance ſhould protect you from needing the aſſiſtance of ſtrangers. After favouring me with this information, ſhe ſtept into the chaiſe which was to conduct her to you, bidding me farewel in a manner that convinced me all efforts to ſee you again would be fruitleſs."

"On our arrival in town," ſaid Lady Melville, "we will anſwer the queſtions ſhe evaded: Louiſa muſt not ſo ſoon part from a friend ſhe has ſo much wiſhed to ſee.

Every thing being ready for the Ladie's departure, they left the inn, and arrived ſafe at their town reſidence, attended by the Lords Melville and Caſtlebrook, and the ſtranger, who informed them his name was Belmont.

The morning after their arrival, Julia and Louiſa, eſcorted by their lovers, took a walk in the Park. When Lady Melville and Mr. Belmont were alone, he genteelly reminded her of her promiſe of giving him ſome information of Louiſa. "Think not, Madam," ſaid

ſaid he, " I aſk out of impertinent curioſity; but when I had the happineſs of reſcuing her from Danvers, in her agitation ſhe told me ſhe was a friendleſs orphan. I wiſh to be ſerviceable to her; as Heaven has lent me a fortune, on which every child of Sorrow ſhall have a claim."

" Your generoſity, my good Sir," returned the Lady, " demands our confidence; and I will inform you, as much as ſhe knows herſelf, of her own hiſtory."

She then related what the reader already knows; concluding with aſſuring him, nothing could give her higher ſatisfaction than ſeeing Louiſa the wife of her ſon.

Mr. Belmont liſtened to the Lady with the deepeſt attention, nor once interrupted her; though compaſſion and horror had alternately marked his features during the recital.

" I had firmly determined to quit London to-morrow," ſaid he, " but own I ſhould be glad to ſee your amiable charge relieved from her doubts. I have ſome little acquaintance with Lord Danford; and, with your permiſſion,

miſſion, will uſe my intereſt to obtain the ſecret. The alliance with your ſon he cannot object to, being ſo highly advantageous. Other motives he will be aſhamed to own. I think he will be in town in a ſhort time; which I will wait with pleaſure, if I can render any ſervice to one ſo very deſerving."

Lady Melville accepted Mr. Belmont's offer, with thanks; for the benevolence which animated his whole conduct, ſet ſuſpicion at defiance, and made the Lady happy at having found a perſon ſhe had no doubt would execute his commiſſion with honour and integrity.

Our young friends returned home, and retired to dreſs. While they were thus employed, Lord Melville's ſervant delivered him the following:

"My Lord,

"I had the mortification, about two hours ſince, of ſeeing you in the Park with Miſs Villars; ſo loſt in the happineſs of your ſituation, that I paſſed unobſerved. As I don't feel my affection for that Lady the leaſt diminiſhed, am determined to give up my

pretenſions

pretenſions only with my life.—What time and place you may think convenient, ſhould be glad to be informed by the bearer.

"DANVERS."

Lord Melville, we are ſorry to ſay, received the above with pleaſure. He had wiſhed earneſtly to meet with Danvers, and revenge the affront of Louiſa. The opportunity till now had not offered; as quitting the country to ſeek him, would have alarmed thoſe he wiſhed free of every inquietude. The means now in his power, he heſitated not a moment in returning the following anſwer:

"SIR,

"Indiſpenſable obligations kept me in the country, or before this I ſhould have had the honour of meeting you. About ſix to-morrow morning, behind Montague-houſe, we may ſettle the difference.

MELVILLE."

P. S. Lord Caſtlebrook will accompany me."

The company met at dinner; after which Lord Melville found an opportunity to acquaint his friend Caſtlebrook and,

and desire him to accompany him in the morning. He then ordered his carriage, and went to his attorney, whom he obliged to make his will; bequeathing his ready money to the amount of forty thousand pounds, to Louisa; the estate wholly descending to his sister, in case of his death without heirs. This point settled, he returned home perfectly satisfied; and the evening past chearfully on every part but Mr. Belmont's, whose extreme gravity nothing could relax.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

A Duel.

——————How many bleed,
By ſhameful variance betwixt man and man!

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

LORD Melville was not unmindful of his appointment; and, before the time, attended by his friend, repaired to the rendezvous; where he was ſoon joined by his adverſary, who was likewiſe accompanied. The Gentlemen moved their hats to each other." "I am extremely ſorry, my Lord," ſaid Mr. Danvers, "to be forced to this ſtep, with a man I ever eſteemed my friend; but you knew I had made the offer of my

my hand and fortune to Miſs Villars, before you ever addreſſed her."

"Excuſes, Sir," ſaid Lord Melville coolly, "are needleſs: indeed, none can palliate your conduct: therefore deeds are better than words." So ſaying, he received his piſtols from Lord Caſtlebrook. His antagoniſt was not backward in following his example; and each diſcharged without effect. Danvers fired his ſecond with as little ſucceſs; but Lord Melville, throwing his a diſtance from him, drew his ſword, and called on Danvers to do the ſame: "Come on, Sir," ſaid he; "I will not take the advantage my remaining piſtol gives me; I fight for Innocence and Virtue——therefore, at any weapon, I am ſure to conquer."

Mr. Danvers was not twice deſired; and for ſome minutes they fought as men who determined to loſe or take a life. At length, Fortune, who appeared to have held the ſcale impartially during the combat, for they had given wound for wound, ſeemed to incline for Lord Melville; and he diſarmed his antagoniſt.

"Take your life, Sir," ſaid he, reſtoring

ſtoring Danvers's ſword ; " for the preſent, we have both enough : hereafter, if you are not ſatisfied, I am to be found."——" I have enough, indeed," returned Danvers ; " Miſs Villars with me will be ſoon forgotten." As he ſpoke, he ſtaggered ; and had not his friend caught him, muſt have fallen to the ground : for Lord Caſtlebrook no ſooner ſaw the combat ended, than he flew for a ſurgeon he had ordered to wait in a coach at ſome diſtance, who immediately applied ſomething to ſtop the effuſion of blood ; after which, they were taken to his houſe, to have their wounds properly dreſſed ; which, on examination, were found equally dangerous. Mr. Danvers was immediately put to bed. Lord Melville peremptorily refuſed. " My abſence," ſaid he, " will alarm my friends more than my appearance : go firſt, Caſtlebrook ; tell them I am only ſlightly wounded, but not by whom ; and I will return in a chair."

Lord Caſtlebrook ſet out on his diſagreeable errand. The amiable family were at breakfaſt. He diſcloſed to them, in the gentleſt manner, the ſituation of

of his friend; ſuppreſſing intirely that his wounds were dangerous.

'Tis impoſſible to paint the diſtreſs of the Ladies; for never was ſon, brother or lover, dearer. Louiſa had fixed her eyes on Lord Caſtlebrook, at the beginning of the recital, with an anxiety that plainly indicated how much ſhe was concerned; but, before ſhe heard the concluſion, the blood forſook her cheek—her lips trembled—the cup dropped from her hand—and ſhe fainted. Tears coming to the relief of Lady Melville and Julia, prevented their ſuffering equally. Nor was their concern leſſened by the arrival of Lord Melville, whoſe pallid looks made them conjecture him much worſe than Lord Caſtlebrook had told them.

Mr. Belmont did not ſee this ſcene unmoved. He knew how unavailing to a wounded heart was the language of conſolation; ſo attempted it not, but bent all his cares to ſee Lord Melville properly attended, as his health was the balm to reſtore the peace of this worthy family.

After the firſt alarm of Lady Melville was over, ſhe enquired particularly with whom

whom her ſon had fought. Lord Caſtlebrook aſſured her (by Lord Melville's deſire) the Gentleman was quite a ſtranger.

Lord Melville had exerted his utmoſt ſtrength, to be brought home: he was no ſooner in bed, but his wounds, from the exertion, bled afreſh, and greatly alarmed even the ſurgeon.

For ſome time he was thought in a dangerous ſtate; during which he was attended with the greateſt tenderneſs by the Ladies. His pillow was never ſo ſmooth as when placed by Louiſa—— nor was the cup from her hand ever refuſed. His danger made her feel how much ſhe eſteemed him; and her former wiſhes for birth and fortune were forgot, in the dread of loſing the man for whom ſhe wiſhed to poſſeſs them.

While things were in this ſtate at Lord Melville's, they were yet worſe with Mr Danvers, whoſe wounds were attended with a fever, which gave great reaſon to fear the termination would be fatal. He earneſtly intreated the faculty to give him their opinion candidly; which, though done in the gentleſt manner, could not fail to alarm him.

him. He immediately ſent for a lawyer, to ſettle his affairs; after which, he deſired him to write a letter himſelf would dictate.

" *To Miſs* LOUISA VILLARS.

" Madam,

" THOUGH appriſed of the horror you will feel on receiving a letter from me, yet I flatter myſelf that paſſion will give way to a ſofter ſenſation, when you know the man ſo hated will ſoon expiate his follies with his life. Believe me when I ſay, I loved you—moſt honourably loved you—and, at the time I ſtole you from Dover, I had no intention but of being united to you by the moſt ſacred ties, would you have conſented—if not, I cannot anſwer what would have been the conſequence. Driven to deſpair by your loſs, I wrote to Lord Danford; whoſe anſwer was,——You had withdrawn

withdrawn yourſelf from his protection, he knew not where. But of this enough. The ſole occaſion of my writing, is to wiſh you as happy with Lord Melville as you deſerve to be, and that he may be as ſenſible of your worth as the unhappy

" DANVERS."

P. S. " I rejoice to hear Lord Melville is better. For my death, let it not concern him; the deed was wholly mine."

The above was no ſooner written than diſpatched, as directed, by a truſty ſervant of Mr. Danvers, and delivered as ſhe was ſitting alone. " A letter for me!" ſaid ſhe; " tis from my charming friend, and will bring peace with it." On caſting her eye on the ſuperſcription, however, ſhe was ſoon convinced it was not from Mrs. Rivers, as that Lady's hand-writing was perfectly known to her. Curioſity made her haſtily tear it open; but, on peruſal of the contents, her ſenſes ſeemed ſuſpended, and

mute

mute aſtoniſhment took poſſeſſion of her features. At length ſhe ſtarted, exclaiming, " Well, well, good Heaven! for what am I reſerved! How many misfortunes am I to feel, or cauſe others to endure, before my hard heart will ſink under the weight of its calamities! Wherever I go, I ſpread deſolation! Even my friends are involved in the deſtruction that ſurrounds me. Generous Auguſtus! what ſorrows have I involved you in! Lady Melville—Julia—all—all muſt execrate me!"

As ſhe ſpoke louder than uſual, her laſt words ſtruck the ears of Mr. Belmont, who was reading in the next room. He immediately threw down his book, and, with more friendſhip than politeneſs, ruſhed into the room. " What is the matter, Miſs Villars? Your voice alarmed me—Are you ill?"—" No Sir," replied ſhe; " I am well, too well; but, I conjure you, leave me. I reſpect, I honour you; that is ſufficient for ſome of my misfortunes to reach and overwhelm you."

" You ſuffer your gentle ſpirits," returned he, " to be too much depreſſed:

preſſed: I have no doubt Lord Melville will do well."

"You do not know, perhaps," ſaid ſhe, "that I am the occaſion of Mr. Danvers' death, and moſt likely Lord Melville's—and, if ſo, his mother cannot ſurvive him——that will be my return for their generous friendſhip!"

"Danvers," replied Mr. Belmont, "is the cauſe of his own misfortunes—he challenged Lord Melville; who acquainted me, as ſoon as he was brought home, who had wounded him. I had hopes it would have eſcaped your knowledge, till he was well recovered; ſo, I conjure you, bear up, my good girl, and do not protract his cure by your ſorrow."

"Heaven forbid!" replied ſhe, ſighing: "all I intreat is, that you would diſcloſe to Lady Melville the cauſe of my grief—tell her, I cannot, muſt not, ſee her—I have robbed her of her ſon, and am not to be forgiven. Give her Danvers's letter, and beg her to pity me."

"Retire to your chamber," ſaid he, "and try to compoſe yourſelf: I will go to Lady Melville, and diſcloſe this

this affair to her; 'tis better ſhe learn it of me, than from your burſts of ſorrow."

He then took her by the hand, and led her to the door of her chamber; after which, he haſted to find Lady Melville, to whom he diſcloſed the foregoing ſcene. Mr. Belmont had no occaſion to exert his power of perſuaſion, to obtain the pity of the Lady; who, though much grieved at the ſituation of her ſon, had a heart too generous to harbour rancour at the innocent occaſion of the miſhap—" ſweet greatful girl," ſaid ſhe, " what has ſhe ever ſeen in me, to dread my preſence? Can ſhe think me ſo unjuſt, to blame her for what ſhe feels as ſenſibly as myſelf, and of which ſhe is equally innocent? She muſt not remain in ſuch an error—I will go and convince her ſhe injures me by ſuch a ſurmiſe; and that her happineſs is as dear to me as my ſon's, who, I hope, will live to repay us both for the uneaſineſs this raſh ſtep of his has occaſioned."

She went directly to Louiſa's chamber, whom ſhe found in a ſituation

that really alarmed her. Her eyes were ſwollen with weeping: but tears had now ſubſided; and ſilent ſorrow, that refuſed conſolation, had taken their place; and every lenient gentle word Lady Melville uſed, could obtain no other anſwer, than unconnected thanks, and repetitions of her own unworthineſs. The Counteſs intreated her to go to bed; as ſhe had hopes reſt would compoſe her ſpirits, and reſtore their wonted tranquillity. But thoſe hopes were fruitleſs; for, after paſſing a ſleepleſs night, during which ſhe alternately laughed and wept, the phyſician, in the morning, pronounced her in a high fever. To hide her illneſs from Lord Melville was impoſſible; to tell the real reaſon was equally ſo; and a cold was made the excuſe for her not appearing in his chamber, as uſual.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

An unexpected Event.

Friendſhip! myſterious cement of the ſoul,
Sweet'ner of life, and ſolder of ſociety!
I owe thee much. Thou haſt deſerv'd from me
Far, far beyond what I can ever pay.

BLAIR'S GRAVE.

LOUISA's fever did not give way to the common remedies, but increaſed to ſuch a height as ſet medicine at defiance. In this ſtate her wounded imagination made her again endure every misfortune ſhe had before ſuffered——Again ſhe thought herſelf in Danvers' power, and implored the

help of Mr. Belmont—again ſhe ſtabbed Lord Danford, and wept the miſguided hand that ſpared her own boſom. At other times, more compoſed, ſhe would ſing in a voice ſo piercing, as would have found its way to the moſt obdurate heart.

Every thing in ſo unpromiſing a ſituation, Lady Melville could ſcarcely conceal her concern; for it ſeemed impoſſible for Louiſa to recover; and, if ſo, ſhe had every reaſon to dread the loſs of her ſon. As to Julia, her paſſions were not tempered like Lady Melville's; and the laughing graces, which uſed to dwell in her eyes, were waſhed away by the tears which perpetually wet her cheeks.

Freſh excuſes were every day invented, to hide the real ſtate of Louiſa from Lord Melville; who, as he could not leave his bed, was forced to appear to believe what he was told; though the melancholy of Lady Melville, and the ſwollen eyes of Julia, filled him with the moſt cruel apprehenſions he was deceived.

Mr. Belmont, though he ceaſed to hope any information he might gain from

from Lord Danford would be of uſe to Louiſa, could not determine to leave ſo deſerving a family in ſuch a ſcene of diſtreſs: he therefore waited the event, with a tender feeling for their troubles, but with a reſignation Chriſtian fortitude only can inſpire. He ſaw Louiſa every day——he knelt by her ſide——he intreated the Power in whom he truſted, to ſpare her: for much did he eſteem her. Her youth and gentleneſs——but, above all, her misfortunes——had won upon his native philanthropy, and forced him to hold a converſe with the world he had long declined.

One day, when Lady Melville and Julia were both in Louiſa's chamber, watching the event of a long ſleep they almoſt feared would be her laſt, ſhe awoke with more compoſure than from the beginning of her illneſs, and, caſting her eyes round, perfectly knew them. "My dear, beſt friends, how much do I trouble you!" ſaid ſhe—"Give me each a hand—Pardon me, Lady Melville what am I the occaſion of; and inform me if Lord Melville, lives." —"He does," returned ſhe, tranſport-

ed to hear her ſpeak ſenſibly——" he lives to reward you for your ſufferings, and to bleſs me by your mutual happineſs."—" No, my dear Madam, that is paſt," replied ſhe. " I once was vain enough to hope ſome ſuch thing, and that the malice of my fate was ſpent; but the deluſion's over——I am haſtening to a land where I can only know peace. That Lord Melville is better, I look to Heaven with thanks ——his death would have been too ſevere a blow. Spared from that, I can bear the reſt."——" Yet more," ſaid Julia; " Danvers will recover; ſo, my dear girl, do not give way to ſuch gloomy ideas: you reſtored to health is all we want to make us happy."—-" Heaven's will be done!" returned Louiſa; " but, as I know my ſenſes are very unſettled, one thing I would intreat, now I have an interval of reaſon, is, that you would write to my friend on the moor—-ſay to her, I had not a wiſh unſatisfied, but to ſee her, and receive her bleſſing, and bid her adieu till we meet again in a better world.——But I feel myſelf faint, and muſt haſten to inform you how your letter may find her."

She

She then told them the uſual direction to Mrs. Bennet; and, being much exhauſted, again attempted to compoſe herſelf; which interval Lady Melville employed in writing the deſired letter, which ſhe diſpatched expreſs.

Louiſa had no return of her delirium; which gave them great hopes: but, ſo much had her former ravings exhauſted her, that it was almoſt impoſſible to hear her ſpeak.

Gold gave the courier ſpeed, and he reached the poſt-houſe at Kendal the third day after his departure from London. He was ſoon directed to the old man's cottage; to the humble maſter of which he delivered the letter.

The old man deſired the ſtranger to ſeat himſelf, and he would ſoon return with an anſwer; for which purpoſe he hurried to his benevolent miſtreſs.—"A letter for me—and by ſuch a conveyance!" ſaid ſhe—"what can it be?" and, before ſhe peruſed the contents, caſt her eye on the ſignature. "From Lady Melville! Good Heaven, preſerve my Louiſa!" She then ran over the contents with a con-

cern true tenderneſs can only feel. "Well, Mary," ſaid ſhe, "our Louiſa is, by this, perhaps, an angel—But, on the ſuppoſition ſhe ſtill lives, ſhe has expreſſed a wiſh to ſee me. Indeed, the deſire is mutual; and, though I never thought of quitting my cottage, if you, with your uſual kindneſs, will accompany me, I think we will venture to London. I am dear to her—ſhe is equally ſo to me—and ſhall I not give her the trivial ſatisfaction of ſeeing me?

Mary, who ſeldom diſſented from her miſtreſs, agreed immediately; and, as mourning weeds, when worn with a heart applicable to the habit, take little arranging, our Ladies were ſoon ready.

The meſſenger returned with them; and they were little more time in reaching the Capital than he had been in bringing the news.

Mrs. Rivers had been ſo long from the world, that ſhe had perhaps forgot the complimentary ſalutations; and her firſt queſtion was of Louiſa. Lady Melville informed her ſhe was ſtill living, and to all appearance better; at which the Lady expreſſed much pleaſure, but

deſired

deſired Louiſa might be informed of her arrival in as gentle a manner as poſſible. Julia joyfully undertook the taſk, and haſtened to Louiſa's chamber, who was ſo much better, as to be able to ſit up in bed, ſupported by pillows, while Mr. Belmont was paying her his uſual viſit. "My ſweet girl," ſaid Julia, "I have ſome news to tell, which muſt give you infinite pleaſure; only promiſe not to be too much ſurpriſed—You have ſome viſitors juſt arrived."—"Who are they?" ſaid Louiſa faintly, "that you would prepare me for their reception. I know no one whoſe appearance can give me ſo much delight, as thoſe already here, except my friends on the Moor, or Madame du Saint; and thoſe will never leave their habitations: ſo, my dear Julia, you need not fear to tell me; for things that are indifferent can neither overpower us with joy nor ſorrow."—"But, ſuppoſe," replied Julia, "ſome of thoſe wiſhed-for friends ſhould be here, can you receive them without the ſurprize injuring your weak ſpirits?"——"Good Heaven!" anſwered ſhe, "tell me, I intreat you, who it

is; if my friend from the moor, I muſt ſink with confuſion, to have occaſioned her ſo much trouble."

"Nay," replied Julia, "if the ſight of thoſe ſo beloved is painful, I ſhall keep it to myſelf."—"Not ſo," returned ſhe; "if 'tis her, let me ſee her; ſhe will bring me peace, health, conſolation—every thing."—"If ſhe can bring thoſe, you ſhall ſee her," ſaid Julia, and immediately went out to perform her promiſe.

Mr. Belmont roſe to go. "Do not leave me," ſaid ſhe; "let me have the pleaſure of ſeeing both my preſervers at the ſame time." She could not add more; for the door opened, and Mrs. Rivers and Bennet, Lady Melville and Julia, entered. Mr. Belmont withdrew to the window, to give the ladies time for their firſt congratulation; for Louiſa's ſurpriſe and pleaſure took from her the power of utterance, and ſhe could only hold out her hand to the amiable Mrs. Rivers, who claſping her arms round her, "my dear child," ſaid ſhe, "how much am I rejoiced to ſee you better! Judge of the pleaſure I muſt feel, by the affection I bear you;

you; which has occaſioned me for a ſhort time to reviſit a world to which I had bidden eternally farewell!

Mrs. Rivers's form, though elegant and beautiful, intirely eſcaped the notice of Mr. Belmont; who, loſt in one of his uſual reveries, "had his eye fixed on vacancy." But the voice of the lady ſhook him from his inattention, and an involuntary exclamation of "Merciful Heaven! am I awake?" eſcaped him. The ſuddenneſs of the expreſſion ſurpriſed the Ladies, who unanimouſly turned and fixed their eyes on the perſon that uttered it; but no ſooner had the eyes of Mrs. Rivers met thoſe of Mr. Belmont, than ſhe gave a loud ſcream, and ſunk ſenſeleſs by the ſide of Louiſa. The affectionate Bennet was ſcarcely leſs alarmed; for, though ſhe attempted to aſſiſt her miſtreſs, her limbs refuſed their office, and, had it not been for the ſupport of Julia, ſhe muſt have fallen to the ground. Mr. Belmont, though the cauſe of the confuſion, was the firſt that flew to the relief of Mrs. Rivers, whoſe ſituation convinced him,

that

that what he thought deluſion, was real waking happineſs.

" I am not miſtaken," cried he; " it is, it is, my Maria—— my love, my wife!" As he ſpoke, he caught her in his arms, and embraced her with an extaſy that recalled her fleeting ſenſes: But the happineſs was too great for her weak ſpirits to bear; for 'twas indeed her Henry——her much-loved, long-lamented huſband— and ſhe could only articulate his name, before ſhe relapſed into a ſtate of inſenſibility. Lady Melville, though aſtoniſhed at this ſcene, was the moſt collected, and intreated Mr. Belmont, if he valued the life of the lady, to leave her, till ſhe had recovered her ſurpriſe. " *If* I value her life, Madam!" ſaid he: " what is there on earth dear without her, my long-loſt, only love!" He now, at Lady Melville's requeſt, placed her on a ſofa; though that Lady was obliged to again repeat her requeſt of his leaving them a ſhort time, which he now unwillingly obeyed.

The uſual remedies were ſome time adminiſtered without effect: at length, however, the lady gave ſigns of returning

turning life. Opening her eyes, ſhe caſt them round with a ſolicitude that ſpoke the emotion of her mind; but, not finding the wiſhed-for object, ſhe exclaimed, "Tell me, I intreat you, what is become of my Henry!—— or is it only my tortured imagination that preſented him?—Yes, bleſt ſpirit, thou hovereſt round me, impatient for the hour when my ſoul, freed from its bonds of clay, ſhall ſpring to meet its counterpart."

"Let me beſeech you," ſaid Lady Melville, "to be calm.——You have really ſeen our much-eſteemed friend, Mr. Belmont."—"Mr. Belmont!" repeated ſhe: "yet ſurely I ſaw my huſband, my beloved Henry—his image is engraven on my heart, and I cannot be miſtaken."

"You are not deceived," ſaid the enraptured Belmont, ruſhing into the room; "we are both awake—awake to ſuch happineſs, that I cannot think on what is paſt, ſo loſt am I in the extaſy of the preſent moment! My Maria is reſtored from death, and all is rapture and boundleſs tranſport!"

A ſcene

A ſcene now followed, which to deſcribe, would require all the pathos of the moſt able writer. They aſked each other numberleſs queſtions, forgetting the anſwers amid the raptures with which their hearts overflowed; until the ſpeechleſs tears of Louiſa (that had perhaps prevented the ſurpriſe of ſuch a meeting being fatal to her) waked them from their tranſports, to ſpeak comfort to her they looked on as the cauſe of their preſent happineſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

A Viſit.

Her terrors vaniſh'd; and a ſofter train
Of mixt emotions, hard to be deſcrib'd,
Her ſudden boſom ſeiz'd: ſhame void of guilt,
The charming bluſh of innocence, eſteem,
And admiration of her lover's flame,
By modeſty exalted: even a ſenſe
Of ſelf-approving beauty ſtole acroſs
Her buſy thought.

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

LORD Melville was ſoon informed, by Mr. Belmont, of this ſtroke of unexpected happineſs, as well as of the real ſtate of Louiſa's health, whoſe recovery they no longer deſpaired of.

"To tell you, my good friend," ſaid Lord Melville, "I rejoice at your happineſs, is to ſay too little; perhaps I ſhould find it hard to expreſs myſelf ſuitably on the occaſion. My heart ever owned

owned you its friend, excluſive of the obligations I owe you on my Louiſa's account. You will now ſeek happineſs no more in foreign climes——you have it now at home——and I ſhall enjoy the ſociety of a man I eſteem as a brother."

Little more paſſed between the Gentlemen; for Belmont was impatient to return to his Maria; and Lord Melville, freed from his uncertainty, longed to try his ſtrength in getting up, that he might be ſoon able to viſit the fair object of his affections.

Some few days after was fixed on, by Lady Melville, for the lovers meeting; but her ſon, whoſe ſpirits ill brooked the reſtraint long laid on them, determined, at all events, the next day, to ſee his Louiſa. Accordingly, he dreſſed himſelf as well as his weak ſtate would permit, and, by the help of his valet, reached the anti-chamber of her room. Sending for Julia, he told her he was determined to ſee Louiſa, but deſired ſhe would firſt acquaint her with his viſit, as the ſurpriſe might be of diſſervicto here.

Julia,

Julia, laughing, re-entered the apartment, where indeed all our friends were aſſembled——" A viſitor, a viſitor, good folks!" ſaid ſhe; " one Doctor Melville. Have you any opinion of his ſkill, Louiſa? He is come to offer his beſt ſervice, and only waits in the next room for permiſſion to pay his devoirs in perſon."

Louiſa, who was ſitting on the ſopha for the firſt time ſince her illneſs, wrapped in a large morning-gown, intreated Lady Melville to make an excuſe for her. " That I ſhould be happy to ſee Lord Melville, I own," ſaid ſhe, " but indeed I cannot ſee him in this ſituation."——" Oh, a truce with your dreſs," returned Julia; " phyſicians have a privilege to ſee people in any déſhabille; ſo, pray enter, Doctor." A ſecond permiſſion was not waited for. In a moment our lovers met. " Why have I been ſo cruelly deceived?" ſaid Lord Melville; " thoſe pallid looks import much more than I have been told."

" It would have been of little uſe to tell you," ſaid Julia, " ſhe was in extreme danger.——Only remember, Auguſtus,

Auguſtus,——next time you are ſeized with an heroic fit,——you may chance to wound more than your enemies."

" You are a painful flatterer, Julia," ſaid he: " though to be of conſequence to thoſe we love, muſt give us delight, yet 'tis infinitely leſſened when we think we have occaſioned them pain."

" Indeed, my Lord," replied Louiſa, " I have ſeverely felt your ſickneſs, as I knew myſelf the cauſe; for my own, I ſhall always look on it as one of the happieſt paſſages of my life, as it occaſioned the meeting of Mr. Belmont and my amiable friend."

That Gentleman now preſented his adored Maria to Lord Melville; and the general happineſs of this little company made wounds and ſickneſs give way to cheerfulneſs and good-humour.

" For a company of Ladies, you poſſeſs very little curioſity," ſaid Belmont——" You ſee a man and wife by different names, yet don't inquire the reaſon."

" Had I not thought the queſtion rude," ſaid Lady Melville, " I ſhould have intreated to know what calamity could have parted you ſo many years,

and

and what ſtrange fatality cōuld have made you believe each other dead."

" The ſtory, my dear Madam," returned he, " is ſo very intricate, that as yet I cannot tell the motives for this cruel ſeparation; but that it muſt be the work of my uncle, is paſt all doubt. Start not, Maria——ſhrink not, Louiſa——when I tell you Lord Danford and Mr. Rivers are one. Nothing, my love, but your abſence from the world could have prevented your hearing of it; 'tis now thirteen years ſince he was created Earl Danford. Bear up, Louiſa (ſeeing her pale and trembling); I am offended at your want of confidence. Do you think, becauſe I partake of his blood, that I ſhare his vices ——or that, as his relation, I muſt be your foe? No, my dear girl, I will take on me the guardianſhip which his behaviour has forfeited; and the day which gives you to your worthy lover, a fortune waits your acceptance, which, though unequal to your merits, I would wiſh to be a memento of my gratitude."

" Spare me," returned Louiſa: " you overwhelm me with kindneſs. I did not doubt your protection; but indeed I cannot

I cannot hear Lord Danford's name without horror."

" I have equal reaſon to execrate him," ſaid Belmont; " for nothing but his contrivance could have cauſed my unhappineſs!——But, come, my dear Maria, tell me what has happened to you ſince our ſeparation; and, in return, I will inform you how ſeverely I have felt your loſs."

Mrs. Rivers inſtantly obeyed; and, with a grace peculiar to herſelf, related what ſhe had before told Louiſa: therefore a repetition here would be needleſs.

" And now, my dear Henry," ſaid ſhe, as ſhe concluded, " tell me every circumſtance that has happened to you ſince our parting." Belmont received a bow of attention from the company, and immediately began.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

Mr. BELMONT's Narrative.

Time, that wears out the trace of deepeſt anguiſh,
As the ſea ſmooths the prints made in the ſand,
Has paſt o'er thee in vain.

TRAGEDY OF DOUGLAS.

" TO paint our parting, my dear Maria, would be painful to remembrance, and making too free with the feelings of our worthy friends: ſuffice it to ſay, that, when the chaiſe I was in reached my uncle's, I was ſo loſt in ſorrow, as ſcarcely to bid him farewell. As for him, he bid me adieu with much ſeeming affection, and

and repeated many promiſes of protection to you, and the little one we expected.—Two years,' ſaid he, 'will be the utmoſt limits of your ſtay—— Had you not married till that time, it had been better; but, as it is, depend on my friendſhip to the charge you leave behind.' With many profeſſions of this ſort, we parted; and I ſet out for Portſmouth, where the ſhip lay, with a firm reliance on his honour, and the friendſhip of his amiable lady, whom I left with you. Ruſſel, the ſervant I took with me, I had ever the higheſt confidence in—he, you ſay, brought the news of my death, as likewiſe my baggage—He muſt have been the agent of the diabolical ſchemes that were afterwards executed. On my arrival at Portſmouth, the Captain came to receive me with great civility, and intreated my company to dinner; after which we were to go aboard. I then, my love, wrote to you, and delivered the letter to Ruſſel, with orders to put it in the poſt, and afterwards to take my things aboard. In the evening, the captain and myſelf joined the ſhip; and, the wind being fair,

we

we immediately ſet ſail. Towards midnight, as I had not ſeen Ruſſel, I deſired the Captain's ſervant to ſend him to me. The man preſently returned, and told me no ſervant of mine came on board, nor any baggage. I was vexed to find my judgment ſo erroneous; for I really thought Ruſſel the honeſteſt fellow in the world, and was now clear he had robbed me. (How could the heart of man plan ſuch a ſcheme! for thoſe things, 'tis plain, were ſtolen for teſtimonials of my death). The Captain ſupplied all my wants in the paſſage; for I had nothing but what I had on. In fine, we arrived ſafe at Bengal: you know, I ſpent many of my boyiſh days there. My old acquaintances flocked to ſee me. An old gentleman, (a friend of my father's) inſiſted on my taking up my habitation with him. My trifling fortune I recovered without trouble; and I counted the hours with impatience, till the time ſhould arrive for my return. In the interim, a ſhip arrived from England. A letter was brought me—it was my uncle's hand—A trembling ſeized me—But how was

my

my horror increaſed, when I peruſed the contents!—As I have ever carried it in my pocket-book, you ſhall hear it, and judge.

" My dear Nephew,

" I KNOW not how to ſpeak comfort to you, when to myſelf it is fruitleſs—or adviſe you to bear your ſorrows like a man, when they have rendered me womaniſh. A fortnight ſince I loſt my dear and ever-valued Mrs. Rivers. Severe as that is, I would our calamities ended there.——How can I write what followed!——Your gentle Maria could not bear the ſhock; but, —after bringing into the world a dead daughter,—expired, three days after her much-loved friend. Dear to each other in life, I ſeparated them not in death, but had them placed together in our family grave. Were I leſs affected myſelf, I ſhould attempt to ſpeak conſolation——But 'tis impoſſible! —The guſt of ſorrow muſt have way —and only time can reconcile us to our loſs. Might I adviſe you— Remain ſome time longer in India, or make the tour of Europe: it may divert a melancholy, which an immediate

diate return to England can only augment, and which would be fruitleſs to thoſe who, by the time you receive this, muſt have been dead almoſt a year.

" Mrs. Rivers bequeathed me her eſtate; which, you know, was in her own power; incumbering it by bearing the name of Belmont, which you muſt alſo uſe. I cannot ſay I am fond of the change; but the fortune is too conſiderable to be loſt for a name; and, as I have expectancy of a title, the alteration will not be material.

" I have nothing to add, but to conjure you to bear your loſs with fortitude——to take the tour I adviſed—— and, when you have regained your tranquillity, you will be a welcome viſitant to

" C. BELMONT."

" The latter part of this letter I did not read till two months after I received it; for I no ſooner reached the account of Maria's death, than, as ſtruck with lightning, I fell ſenſeleſs. My generous hoſt had me conveyed to bed, and bled; but, in ſpite of all his care, I was ſeized

with a violent fever, accompanied by ſo ſtrong a delirium, that, had I not been conſtantly watched, I had certainly put an end to my exiſtence. In this ſtate I remained for ſix weeks; at which time the fever left me, but ſo emaciated with grief and ſickneſs, that for more than two months I was unable to leave my room. I was fully determined to return to England, as ſoon as I ſhould regain ſtrength to go on board of ſhip; but this deſign was rendered abortive, by my friend and hoſt, Mr. Davis, being ſtruck with a fever (which I ſincerely believe he caught by his cloſe attendance on me); during which he continually intreated me, by the memory of my father, not to quit him. The adjuration was too ſolemn to be refuſed, had I not been bound to him by ties of gratitude and affection; which was really the caſe. It was ſix months ere he completely regained his health; and when, at the expiration of that time, I again mentioned my voyage, he diſſuaded me from it by every argument in his power. 'Your uncle wiſhes you,' ſaid he, 'to regain your tranquillity before you return; which at preſent is ſo far from being the caſe, that

that you ſeem to have contracted a ſettled gloom. Will a viſit to your native land remove it? No—I fear rather increaſe it. Believe me, I have had loſſes great as yours. In the early part of my life,' continued he, 'I was in the mercantile line, bleſt with an amiable wife and ſon. When he was about fifteen, I met with ſome loſſes, ſo ſevere, that bankruptcy was the conſequence. To complete my misfortunes—before my affairs were ſettled, I loſt my boy. Thoſe joint calamities were too much for my gentle partner to bear, and ſhe ſunk under the weight of her ſorrows. Driven to deſpair, I went into the army, hoping ſome friendly ſword would join me to thoſe for whoſe ſake I hated life; but the peace ſoon after obliged me to return to England, where I had the offer of a very lucrative place in the Indies. I immediately accepted it: nor do I ever intend to reviſit my native land, till I am incapable of ſorrow—Then would I wiſh my bones to be taken to reſt with thoſe of my wife and ſon. Then remain with me,' continued he—'Your misfortunes have endeared you to me—I will ſettle my affairs in India, and return with you to

Europe—In France or Italy we ſhall find ſome agreeable habitation. Did I not know your temper, I would tell you, in return for ſuch a condeſcenſion, I would leave you my fortune—But I will ſay what will have more influence: your company will ſooth my declining years, and ſmooth my paſſage to the grave.'—— He ceaſed, and the tear rolled down his furrowed cheek, waiting my anſwer. Picture to yourſelf, Maria, a venerable old man, intreating me to ſupply the place of his ſon—Could I deny his grey hairs, or add another pang to his aged heart?—In ſhort, I promiſed to ſtay with him until his affairs were ſettled in India, and himſelf fixed in ſome habitation in either France or Italy. It was near two years before we could leave Bengal. At length, however, we ſailed in a French Eaſt-Indiaman; and, after a tedious voyage, arrived ſafe at Breſt. My venerable friend contrived every means he could deviſe, to reſtore my tranquillity; and, when we had recovered the fatigue of our ſea voyage, purpoſed to ſet out on the intended tour. I then reminded him that I had ſtaid in India to oblige him; and hoped he would not now attempt to

diſ-

diſſuade me from a viſit to England, as I was fully determined to pay my duty at my Maria's grave; after which, I would return, and, if he deſired it, never more quit him. My friend combated my inclinations no longer; and I ſet off, travelling night and day till I reached my uncle's ſeat in Nottinghamſhire, where my Maria's remains were ſaid to be laid. Mr. Davis's opinion I found truly verified: the ſight of my native land, inſtead of decreaſing my unhappineſs, augmented it; and the gloomy melancholy which before poſſeſſed me was overcome by boiſterous, outrageous ſorrow. Lord Danford (for he had then that title) was at his ſeat; but, totally unmindful of him, I haſtened to the church-yard—the vault I well knew. Caſting myſelf on the black marble that covered it, my actions became too frantic to be recounted, and my feelings too painful to be remembered. It was a ſummer morning, about the hour of three, when I arrived; and my breaſt ſtill preſſed the earth at ſeven, when the ſexton came to follow his uſual employ; who, ſhaking me by the arm, aſked my buſineſs there. Thus diſturbed, I immediately roſe, and, concealing my

agitation as much as poſſible, walked about two miles, where I had left my ſervant and horſes. My ſpirits, by this time, were ſomething more tranquil, and I rode to my uncle's. He received me with viſible emotion; which I imputed to my preſence, reminding him of our joint loſs. During a fortnight I remained there, he ſcarcely ever ſuffered me to be alone. My evening viſits to the tomb, he could not prevent; but always took care (on pretence of tenderneſs) to ſend ſome one to diſturb me. His ſervants, I obſerved, were all ſtrangers; which he accounted for, by telling me he had loſt a prodigious quantity of plate, and, as he could not fix the guilt on any in particular, had diſcharged the whole. Mrs. Bennet, he ſaid, was gone with her huſband, to ſome part of the Weſt-Indies (he was ignorant where), to take poſſeſſion of an eſtate, left them ſome time ſince. I had ever thought him my friend; ſo could have no doubt of his ſincerity. Mr. Davis wrote to me while I was in England, intreating my ſpeedy return; and my uncle preſſing it likewiſe, I returned to France, with a heart nothing eaſier for the journey. My friend received

ceived me with the affection of a father; and, ſoon after, we ſet out on our intended tour, and in four years viſited moſt parts of Europe. I then propoſed to Mr. Davis, to take a houſe I had accidentally ſeen, on the borders of a wood, near a ſmall village, in Languedoc. He immediately conſented: the houſe was taken; two ſervants of each ſex provided; and we lived in it till about eight months ſince, when I loſt my ever revered friend, rather through age than ſickneſs. Finding his end approaching, he addreſſed me nearly as follows:——'I had hopes, my dear Henry, before I quitted this vale of mortality, to have ſeen you ſomething better reconciled to your fate; but melancholy ſeems to have taken ſuch root in your breaſt, that time cannot efface it: once more I intreat you, try to diſpel it. Your fortune will now be large; in the manner we live, it cannot be expended. Seek out the widow and the orphan; relieve their wants; for in ſoothing their ſorrows, you will alleviate your own. Near eighty winters have paſſed over my head—yet have I known calamity. Grief, though it may embitter our lives, ſeldom deſtroys: ſo cheer

your ſpirits, my ſon; and your evening of life may yet be calm and ſerene.' He then told me he had bequeathed me his whole fortune, which was in the Engliſh funds; and deſired I would come over and adminiſter to his will, and transfer the ſtock in my name;——convey his body to England, and place it by his family. My good friend died two days after this diſcourſe—I felt his loſs as that of an affectionate parent, and was for ſome time unable to obey his commands, in giving the neceſſary orders to have him conveyed to England. At length, however, his remains, attended by two ſervants, were embarked. Myſelf, and one ſervant, came by the way of Calais, to prepare every thing for this laſt mournful duty. We immediately croſſed to Dover, where we remained all night, and the next morning continued our journey on horſeback. There I was happy enough to reſcue Louiſa. Her melancholy touched me, and I could not help imagining ſhe reſembled my Maria. You know what followed. Our farewell was at the inn, from whence I went to fetch the woman that attended her; for I could not prevail to ſee her any more. I continued

my

my journey to town, a ſmall diſtance from which my friend was to be interred. The body did not arrive till a month after me; at which time it was depoſited as he deſired.

I ſhould not omit telling you, that, on the death of Mr. Davis, my ſervant wrote Lord Danford an account of what had happened (myſelf being ill), but had not mentioned my coming to England; and, on my arrival, as I had no wiſh for company, I preferred a private lodging (my uncle being out of town) to his houſe.

"My affairs took near a fortnight in ſettling; on which I found myſelf poſſeſſed of one hundred and fifty thouſand pounds. I ſet off poſt for Nottinghamſhire: there again my feelings, Maria, were awaked to agony—the happineſs I had once enjoyed in this ſpot, only made the preſent more drear. My uncle, I found, had been gone ſome time to Danford Caſtle, where I purpoſed to join him, as ſoon as I could quit the painful ſpot which (I thought) contained my Maria.

"I wrote Lord Danford word I would be with him in a few days, and accordingly kept my word. To my ſurprize,

I found him confined to his bed, from a wound in his arm, which he informed me he received from a robber, about three nights before, in his own park. The wound, for a long time, was thought dangerous; in which ſituation I was unwilling to leave him: but, when near healed, I told him my intention of returning to France, as I found my ſpirits more agitated in England than in the quiet retreat I had ſo long been accuſtomed to. He appeared to approve of my return to the Continent; and we parted. On the road to London, I met Lady Melville, and our young friends. I intreated to know Louiſa's hiſtory. The Counteſs obliged me; and I found, by her recital, who was the real perſon that had wounded Lord Danford; and determined to uſe my influence with him to diſcover her family. For that purpoſe I ſtaid. Bleſt delay! which has given me back my long-loſt love!—I ſhall now wander no more—every place is home and heaven!"

Mr. Belmont concluded; and our little company ſoon after ſeparated for the

the night, promiſing to meet earlier the next day. Though Lady Melville had apprehended danger from Louiſa's being ſo long diſturbed, a few days convinced her, that the company of beloved friends is more efficacious than medicine.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

Villainy.

——Whence, deeply rankling, grows
The partial thought, a liſtleſs unconcern,
Cold, and averting from our neighbour's good;
Then dark diſguiſe, and hatred, winding wiles,
Coward deceit, and ruffian violence:
At laſt, extinct each ſocial feeling, fell
And joyleſs inhumanity pervades
And petrifies the heart.

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

IN a ſhort time, Louiſa was enough recovered to leave her chamber. The lover was again importunate, and found warm advocates in Mr. Belmont and his Maria; who, however, thought it moſt prudent to defer the marriage till Lord Danford's

Danford's return to London, which was daily expected.

Some few days after, he accordingly arrived; which Mr. Belmont was no ſooner informed of, than he wrote to him.

" My Lord,

" You doubtleſs have thought me ſome time paſt in France, brooding over the ſorrows you have ſo ingeniouſly contrived for me. But the ſpell is broke —Your Lordſhip is now perfectly *known* to me. All ſubterfuge is vain—I muſt be informed what purpoſe it was to anſwer, that my dear Maria has for years been tortured—loſt to her huſband, and the world: likewiſe, who Miſs Louiſa Villars's parents were—and what fortune ſhe ſhould poſſeſs; for, though you have forfeited all right as her guardian, ſhe has ſtill a protector in

" HENRY BELMONT."

Words are inadequate to expreſs Lord Danford's ſituation, on the receipt of the above. For ſome minutes, amazement and horror left him motionleſs. Shook from that, he ſaw his dark tranſactions,

of

of many years, all at once diſcovered—He felt he muſt be ſhunned and execrated by all mankind—He ſaw no remedy but death or flight. His crimes were too great not to make him dread the firſt—and eternal infamy was in the latter. In this dilemma, he ſummoned his counſellor, Mrs. Maſters, who had lived with him many years, and indeed knew all his tranſactions. To this lady he diſcloſed his ſituation; who, though ſhocked at the diſcovery (as ſhe well knew the dangerous conſequence), yet was more collected than his lordſhip, and adviſed him to return word, He would explain all on the morrow; as by that time he might form a more probable ſtory than was poſſible at this juncture.

'Tis ſaid, the Devil firſt betrays to ſin, and afterwards to puniſhment. This happened to be exactly the caſe with Mrs. Maſters, who no ſooner gave a little time to recollection, than ſhe found this diſcovery muſt ruin Lord Danford, and moſt likely involve her in it. There was but one way to ſave herſelf; which was, to diſcover all ſhe knew to Mr. Belmont. This, her prolific brain ſuggeſted, would not only procure her pardon, but reward.

reward. The lady then, as ſoon as ſhe conveniently could, left her lord to the pangs of deſpair, and haſtened to Lady Melville's; where the ſervant that brought the letter had informed them Mr. Belmont was. She immediately inquired for him, and was ſhown into a parlour, and ſoon waited on by the Gentleman; who, recollecting her, exclaimed, "I am much deceived, Madam, if you are not the perſon who attended Miſs Villars from France:—have you any buſineſs with me?"—"Yes, Sir," returned ſhe, "but of ſuch a nature, that I cannot diſcloſe it without firſt obtaining a promiſe of your pardon." "I can't ſee why my pardon can be neceſſary," replied he, "but will venture to promiſe you Louiſa's: her's, I ſuppoſe, will be the moſt material, as the injured party." "No, indeed," ſaid ſhe; yours and that of your Lady is the moſt eſſential—and I again intreat it, before I dare inform you of what muſt give you both anguiſh and delight, and will cover me with endleſs confuſion."—"Proceed then," ſaid he, with impatience; "as far as I can promiſe pardon for crimes I am unacquainted with, you have mine."

mine." His manner was too peremptory to be refuſed; and Mrs. Maſters, with ſome heſitation, began.

"Eighteen years, and change of name, have made ſo great an alteration, that you do not recollect, in me, the ſervant that ſucceeded Mrs. Bennet, to wait on your Lady, then Miſs Clairville. Your uncle took particular notice of me —in ſhort, by his promiſes, and preſents, he obtained all he wiſhed: but I was ſoon informed he had only taken that method to make me more effectually his creature, in his deſigns on my miſtreſs, without whom he ſwore he could not live. Though this was by no means pleaſing, yet the preſents he offered were ſo great, that I conſented to aſſiſt him all in my power. Your ſervant Ruſſel was in the conſpiracy; and, with the aſſiſtance of a perſon of his procuring, they were ſome night (after the family were gone to bed) to force Miſs Clairville into a chaiſe, and convey her to my maſter. This was the eaſier to be effected, as her room was in the left wing of the houſe, where nobody ſlept but ourſelves and Ruſſel. However, this ſcheme was fruſtrated by a letter (which Ruſſel wrote

to

to George) being loſt the very day before that on which our plan was to take place: at leaſt we ever thought that the reaſon of your haſty elopement to Scotland.

"Your uncle was waiting about twenty miles from home; where he intended to meet the lady, and convey her to a place of ſafety. Ruſſel, on her not returning in the evening, ſet out immediately to him with the news. It is impoſſible to deſcribe his diſtraction—He vowed to purſue you both with never-ending vengeance—to make you feel tenfold the anguiſh you had occaſioned him—and, finally, everlaſtingly to ſeparate you from your bride—which he had no doubt ſhe was by that time. Ruſſel returned as ſoon as poſſible, to prevent ſuſpicion. Your uncle came home, two days after, in all appearance tolerably compoſed. Mrs. Rivers diſcharged me: but I was not much at a loſs; for your uncle ordered me to go to London. On my arrival in town, I hired a lodging near his houſe, and took the name of Maſters. The woman with whom I lodged was of moſt infamous character; which was not loſt on Mr. Rivers, even on his firſt viſit. For my part, I thought he

was

was tolerably reconciled to you; but about ſeven months after, hearing your lady was with child, he came to my lodging in a ſtate little ſhort of frenzy—'Can Henry imagine,' ſaid he, 'a child of his, by Maria Clairville, ſhall ever inherit my fortune?—nay, more,—part of it, perhaps, in my life-time!—for Mrs. Rivers has bequeathed them hers, ſhould ſhe die before me.'

"I aſked him, when he was rather calmer, how he knew Mrs. Rivers's fortune was left to your lady? 'By the information of the lawyer who made the will,' ſaid he! 'They have fooled me once—'Tis now my turn:—they ſhall be diſappointed, and I revenged.'

"The next day, he met the attorney, at my apartments; and between them it was agreed, that he ſhould draw a will exactly like that he had drawn for Mrs. Rivers, only ſubſtituting your uncle's name throughout inſtead of Maria Rivers, to whom the fortune was left on condition of bearing her maiden name of Belmont.

"The will was drawn—Mrs. Rivers's ſignature copied—and Ruſſel and myſelf made witneſſes. I ſhould not omit telling you,

you, Ruſſel was a conſtant viſitor at my lodgings, and received large preſents from your uncle for the news he always brought. I aſked your uncle of what uſe the will would be, as Mrs. Rivers might outlive him: 'If ſhe does,' returned he, 'I ſhall have no occaſion for it—if not, I ſhall be ſafe. 'Tis true, I once loved Maria ſo well, that, had it been in my power, I would have laid my whole fortune at her feet; but now (if poſſible) I hate her more invincibly than ever I loved her!' He then told me he had formed a plan of ſending you to India—'Much may be done in ſo long a ſeparation,' ſaid he. 'Though I have no deſigns on her perſon, by ſome means I will everlaſtingly mar their peace:—'twill be moſt glorious revenge.'

"Much more paſſed to the ſame purport; and the voyage was ſoon after propoſed to you. Your uncle informed me, his lady uſed every argument in her power to diſſuade him from letting you go—but in vain. You ſet out for Portſmouth, attended only by Ruſſel, in whom you had an intire confidence—You know he betrayed that truſt. 'Twas ſo contrived by your uncle. He returned

ed immediately to London with your baggage, took private lodgings, and remained concealed near two months ; at the expiration of which time he appeared, apparently in deep ſorrow. You were ſeized, he ſaid, after being a fortnight at ſea, with a violent fever, and expired in three days—that, fortunately meeting an Engliſh veſſel at the Madeiras, he thought it beſt to return, and bring your property home.—This being told to your uncle's lady without any caution (joined, I believe, to his reproaches for her ſorrow at the loſs of her heir, as he termed him), threw that lady into convulſions, that terminated her life in about five days after ſhe heard the news.—Your wife, uneaſy at not hearing from Mrs. Rivers for ſome days, came to town. She had not yet been acquainted with this falſe account ; nor, indeed, had your uncle determined in what manner ſhe ſhould be told it. On her arrival, Ruſſel, by chance, opened the ſtreet-door. A ſcene of horror followed. For a moment ſhe was motionleſs—then, in a voice ſcarcely articulate, aſked a number of queſtions concerning you. For this they were not prepared, as ſhe was totally

totally unexpected; and Ruſſel ſtammered out ſomething of ſickneſs.—'I know all now,' ſaid ſhe wildly, 'by your mourning-dreſs—he is dead.' She ſaid no more (the ſhock was too great), but ſunk ſenſeleſs on the ground.'

Mr. Belmont now interrupted the lady's narrative, by walking up and down the room, with a countenance ſo diſtorted between ſorrow and rage, that it was impoſſible to ſay which was moſt predominant.

Mrs. Maſters dropped on her knees ——"Ruſſel, Sir," ſaid ſhe, "informed me of what paſt: perhaps he might exaggerate. For Heaven's ſake, pardon me, before I relate the reſt."—"Proceed, woman," replied he, "or await the fate your crimes merit."

"Your uncle," continued ſhe, "was in the houſe when this happened, and came down at the noiſe. I believe he was ſorry to ſee the ſtate of your lady, but ordered her to be immediately put into Mrs. Rivers's chair, and conveyed to my lodgings. He came firſt, and ordered me to keep out of ſight. 'By Heaven,' ſaid he, 'my revenge is greater than I expected!—I only meant to ſeparate

ſeparate—not to kill.'—Your lady was now brought, but quite ſenſeleſs; ſo that I could remain in the room with great ſafety. A phyſician was ſent for, who pronounced her in the greateſt danger: in ſhort, ſhe paſſed the night in dreadful agonies, and in the morning was delivered of a daughter.—O! Sir, you will forgive me all I have told you, when I now inform you, that daughter was not dead, as repreſented—nay, more, ſhe ſtill lives—that in Miſs Villars you ſee your child!—' Merciful Heaven!' interrupted Mr. Belmont, ' is it poſſible! or do you invent this ſubterfuge to avoid explaining who ſhe really is, and to divert my juſt revenge from the perpetrators of ſuch infernal actions as Lord Danford and you are guilty of?'

" No—on my life, Sir," ſaid Mrs. Maſters.—" Think on her age—Compare her perſon—Is ſhe not exactly what Miſs Clairville was, when you ſet out to Scotland?"

Mr. Belmont was ſome minutes too much affected to reply. At length covering his face with his handkerchief, he ordered Mrs. Maſters to continue.

" Your

" Your uncle was immediately informed of what had happened. He ordered me to convey the child to my friends in the country, and paſs it for my own. The landlady was alſo well paid for her part of the tranſaction; and every body was told the infant was dead. I took it away, the night after it was born, to my relations, near forty miles from town. At my return, your uncle's lady was dead, and Mrs. Bennet was with your wife; ſo I could not remain in the houſe, as ſhe would have known me. Mrs. Rivers's ſenſes, I was informed, were quite loſt: and your uncle, to remove her intirely from your knowledge, gave Mr. Bennet four thouſand pounds, under pretence of kindneſs, to ſettle with her in the country. About a year after, Bennet wrote word ſhe was much better; but your uncle, who wiſhed to ſee her no more, anſwered in a manner that had the deſired effect; for they removed, but he could never learn where.

" Mr. Rivers, by this means, ſatisfied his revenge, and enjoyed the fortune left to your lady. But he was never happy; he lived in continual apprehenſion of your finding out the deceit; and, had you

you come to live in England, his fears would have made him quit it. He even diſcharged all his old ſervants, that had the leaſt knowledge of you or Mrs. Rivers; took me to live in the houſe with him; and fixed Ruſſel as ſteward to a new eſtae the purchaſed in the North: but he did not enjoy his new employ long; he was killed by a fall from his horſe in leſs than three months.

" Your uncle did not conceal from me the ſatisfaction the death of Ruſſel gave him. ' There is the moſt material evidence removed,' ſaid he; ' a fellow that would ever have kept me in dread: if I can but contrive to keep Henry abroad, I have nothing to fear.'

" Thus time paſſed for ſome years. Your daughter Louiſa (for ſhe was chriſtened by that name) was removed at the age of five, and placed in a convent. I took her myſelf to France, and paid ſome years in advance, as I would have no queſtions aſked;—ſaid ſhe was an orphan, of the name of Villars, intirely dependant on the bounty of the Gentleman who had undertaken her guardianſhip. As they had no direction by which they might find us, we heard nothing of her

her for eight years; at which time I went over, and paidfour years more; at the expiration of which I ſaid I ſhould fetch her home.

" On my return to England, your uncle (who had for ſome years been Earl Danford) aſked me what we were to do with her, when the time was expired. ——She's a fine girl, my lord, (ſaid I); paſs her to the world for a natural daughter of your own.——' 'Tis not a bad thought,' returned he; but I diſlike her unſeen, ſo cannot come to a reſolution of that kind yet.'

" During all thoſe years, you, Sir, were but once in England. I was kept out of the way the whole time, for fear you ſhould recollect me.

" Four years paſſed over, and I mentioned to Lord Danford my promiſe of fetching Louiſa home. With ſome difficulty, he conſented. On my arrival at Abbeville, I became acquainted with Mr. Danvers, but had no idea of his attachment to Louiſa. He came with us to England. You know his deſperate intent, when yourſelf reſcued her. So many years had paſſed, that I did not reccollect you when you came to Dover, but an-

ſwered in the manner I did, becauſe I knew Lord Danford would never pardon my having formed an acquaintance on the road; and, another reaſon, I had hopes of hiding my own imprudence reſpecting Danvers. Lord Danford was at the caſtle, a ſeat he had lately bought. We joined him there. His averſion to Louiſa was quickly changed; 'twas not loſt on me. I remonſtrated—and he promiſed a change of conduct. One day a letter arrived from you, which informed him you would be with him in a few days. Louiſa and myſelf were to be ſent out of the way; and accordingly, next day, on pretence of getting things ready for her reception, he ſent me—Louiſa was to follow in two days—but from that hour I have not ſeen her.

" You arrived three days after, and found Lord Danford ſtabbed in the arm, and remained with him until the cure was near completed; which, he ſince has informed me, would have been much ſooner, but that your preſence, and the recollection of the injuries he had done you, kept him in a continual fever. I by chance ſaw you one day, while you were at Danford Caſtle, and immediately recollected

recollected you for the perſon that had reſcued Louiſa; of which I did not fail to inform your uncle. His ſurpriſe was extreme. 'Aye, Maſters, ſaid he, 'the hand of Heaven is againſt us; for, though I deprived Henry of one fortune, by that loſs he has found a larger: but we have gone too far to recede. Your departure ſoon after, as he imagined, for France, a little calmed his ſpirits; and Louiſa was ſought with the greateſt aſſiduity----but in vain. He heard not the ſmalleſt tidings of her, till this morning he received your note. I left him in a ſtate not to be deſcribed. He is unacquainted with my coming, and utterly at a loſs what anſwer to give you."

CHAP. XXIII.

Suicide.

——————Dreadful attempt!
Juſt reeking from ſelf-ſlaughter, in a rage
To ruſh into the preſence of our Judge!
As if we challeng'd him to do his worſt,
And matter'd not his wrath. Unheard-of tortures
Muſt be reſerv'd for ſuch: theſe herd together;
The common damn'd ſhun their ſociety,
And look upon themſelves as fiends leſs foul.

BLAIR'S GRAVE.

Mrs. Maſters ceaſed, and expected Mr. Belmont to ſpeak; but that Gentleman, pulling the bell, ordered a ſervant to tell Lord Melville he deſired his company a moment. Lord Melville immediately attended him. "My Lord," ſaid he, "by this woman I am informed of the parents of Miſs Villars, but muſt have better authority; will you favour me with your company to Lord Danford's?"——"Willingly, Sir," returned he.——"But firſt," ſaid Mr. Belmont,

Belmont, " apologiſe to the Ladies for our abſence—the ſight of Maria and Louiſa at this time would render me incapable of the buſineſs I am going upon."—" Good Heaven! what buſineſs?" ſaid Lord Melville.—" Nay, nothing that need alarm you, on my honour; only an anſwer from Lord Danford. You cannot think I mean to raiſe my hand againſt the brother of my father—though he is the greateſt villain that ever exiſted."

Lord Melville ſoon made the neceſſary apology; and our gentlemen, with Mrs. Maſters, ſet out immediately for Lord Danford's.

On the way, Mr. Belmont informed the young Lord what Mrs. Maſters had told him concerning Louiſa. He had, however, ſcarce time to expreſs his aſtoniſhment, before they found themſelves at Lord Danford's door; at which a ſervant announced them, with ſeveral loud raps, before they could find entrance. At length, a man, with horror depicted on his features, opened the door.——" Oh! Sir!——My Lord"—ſaid he.—" What of him?" ſaid Mr. Belmont. " Oh! Sir—he has ſhot himſelf"—" Be merciful to him, juſt Heaven!"

ſaid Belmont---" But, ſeek aſſiſtance; it may not be too late."----" Indeed, Sir, it is," replied the ſervant; " we heard the report of a piſtol about a quarter of an hour ago—I ran up ſtairs directly—but his death was inſtantaneous. On the table was this letter;" delivering one directed to Mr. Belmont, who immediately put it in his pocket, and again ordered aſſiſtance; which, however, proved abortive, as the ball had paſſed his brain.

The Gentlemen retired into the parlour, where Lord Melville deſired Mr. Belmont, whoſe agitation had made him forget the letter, to have recourſe to that. Mr. Belmont immediately opened it, and read the following lines:

" You will not wonder at my perpetrating an act ſo very heinous as ſuicide, when you are informed of the crimes I have already committed. This is only in Maſters's power to inform you. Let her be ſeized—She has been my agent in the buſineſs. It only remains with me to tell you, Mrs. Rivers's fortune ſhould have been yours at her death—that Louiſa (whom I attempted to ſeduce) is my niece—and your daughter.

ter. Were it poſſible that what I have been guilty of, could by any means be expiated, the horrors I have for years experienced might effect it——but 'tis in vain; and I ruſh from the preſent ill, certain no tortures can be worſe than my own conſcience."

"DANFORD."

"Unhappy man!" ſaid Mr. Belmont; "your death and life were equally dreadful.——May Heaven be more merciful than you dared hope!"

"Shocking indeed!" ſaid Lord Melville. "But, my dear Sir, why ſtay in ſuch a ſcene of horror? Your Lady, by this time, expects you. Haſte, then, and make her and my dear Louiſa happy—At ſight of ſuch a wife and daughter, you will forget Lord Danford."

"Though I long," ſaid Mr. Belmont, "to catch Louiſa to my heart, and beſtow on her a parent's benediction, yet it muſt be done with caution; the news haſtily told might be fatal. But let us return home; the ſight of them will calm my ſpirits."

He now ſummoned a ſervant, with whom he left orders; nor did he forget

Mrs.

Mrs. Maſters, to whom he addreſſed himſelf as follows: " 'Tis true, you deſerve the ſeverity of the law; but, in compaſſion, as you have diſcloſed the truth, and in mercy to my uncle's crimes, over which I would willingly caſt a veil, you are free. I would put it in your power to repent—Call half-yearly on my agent in town; he ſhall ſupply you with a ſum to keep you above want. Don't anſwer"—(ſhe was about to ſpeak) —" and never let me ſee you more."

This buſineſs ſettled, our Gentlemen returned home, and joined the Ladies, who had ſome time expected them. The perturbation of their minds was viſible in both their faces. " My dear Henry," ſaid Mrs. Belmont (for we muſt hereafter call the Lady by that name), " what has diſordered you? I judged you were gone to Lord Danford's and have felt inexpreſſible pain.—For Heaven's ſake, ſee him no more—Who knows what deep-laid plot his evil mind may next form!"

" Fear not, Maria," returned he; " his plots, unhappy man! are over. Before we reached his houſe this morning, he had eſcaped my reproaches by ſudden

ſudden death—after making what atonement he could, by diſcloſing the truth reſpecting Louiſa and yourſelf."

While Mr. Belmont ſpoke, his eyes involuntarily ſtrayed between his Lady and Louiſa. He now could trace (to his thoughts), in the face of the latter, every feature of his Maria—and burnt with impatience to make them ſharers of his happineſs.

Mrs. Belmont received the news of Lord Danford's death in ſilence—but, raiſing her expreſſive eyes to Heaven, ſeemed to aſk that mercy for him he neglected to intreat himſelf.

" Tell me, I conjure you," ſaid Louiſa, with a faltering voice; " was I al-
" lied to Lord Danford?"

" Yes," replied Belmont, ſummoning all his fortitude to anſwer the queſtion; " your father was his near relation."

" Good Heaven! One more queſtion, and I have done," ſaid Louiſa, her voice more inarticulate than before, and deep bluſhes covering her face,—" Who—who——what was my mother?"

" A ſuffering angel—who will forget her ſorrows, on the recovery of ſuch a daughter!"

" Speak

"Speak out," ſaid Mrs. Belmont, who till this moment had been all attention—"after the ſtrange viciſſitudes that have lately happened, why ſhould you fear our fortitude?"

"Exert it, then, Maria—A bleſſing awaits you!—a bleſſing beyond your utmoſt hopes!——Louiſa is—your daughter!——is my child!—the dear, expected one, when I went to India!"

Louiſa and her mother were ſpeechleſs in each other's arms—but, preſſing them alternately to his enraptured heart, tears ſoon made way for words——"Am I indeed—indeed—your child?" ſaid Louiſa, claſping Mr. Belmont's knees——"Tell me ſo again—for fear my ſenſes ſhould have deceived me the firſt time—Is it poſſible that this dear, honoured Lady, is my mother!"

"Yes, my loved girl," returned he, "I repeat it,—You are my child—you are the daughter of your much-eſteemed friend."

"Oh, joy!—oh, happineſs!"—ſaid Louiſa, ſinking at Mrs. Belmont's feet—"I have a mother——and ſuch a mother!——Bleſs, bleſs your enraptured daughter!"

Mrs.

Mrs. Belmont preſſed her to her breaſt in ſilence. Indeed, this ſtrange diſcovery had wrought ſo ſtrongly on all, as to render them incapable of interference, or giving neceſſary aſſiſtance to thoſe moſt concerned; and ſobs were only audible from every perſon in the room.

Lord Melville, after ſome minutes, recollected himſelf ſo far as to leave the room, and ſend in Mrs. Bennet with drops; whom Mrs. Belmont no ſooner ſaw, than, haſtily riſing, "See, Mary," ſaid ſhe, "did not you tell me Louiſa reſembled me?——Oh, ſhe is my daughter!"

Bennet, as well as tears would permit, congratulated all. "Yes, faithful friend of my Maria's ſolitary hours," ſaid Belmont, "you ſhall likewiſe be the companion of the happy days I hope are in ſtore for her"

Our friendly company, after ſome time, grew more compoſed, and intreated Mr. Belmont to tell them in what manner thoſe ſtrange events had happened. He obeyed. The narrative recalled their attention, and prevented the (perhaps) too violent effects of joy.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIV.

Concluſion.

——————Virtue ſole ſurvives,
Immortal, never-failing friend of man,
His guide to happineſs on high.

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

A FEW days after, Lord Danford was interred; and Mr. Belmont took poſſeſſion of the eſtate, the title being extinct, as Lord Danford died childleſs.

Lord Caſtlebrook was importunate with the lovely Julia to fix a day for his happineſs—"Court Louiſa," ſaid ſhe, laughing; "the day that makes her Lady Melville, I perhaps may be prevailed on."

"A match!" interrupted Mr. Belmont, who overheard the diſcourſe. "What ſay

ſay you, Louiſa? Julia conſents to marry Lord Caſtlebrook on the day you join your fate with Lord Melville. Do not protract it——name a ſpeedy one."——"Now I know," anſwered Louiſa, "my hand brings no diſgrace with it, I offer it unaſked—make it his when you pleaſe, Sir."

Lord Melville, enraptured, imprinted numberleſs kiſſes on the extended hand. "Oh, I retract," ſaid Julia: "you have caught me unfairly; 'twas on Louiſa's own conſent, without the authority of Mr. Belmont, I meant."

"No authority was uſed," ſaid Louiſa, bluſhing; "I gave it as willingly as ever it was aſked."

"Well, then—if it muſt be—take me, Lord Caſtlebrook—and Heaven give you no cauſe to repent!"

Mutual congratulations now paſſed—and mirth and pleaſure triumphed in every face.

That day month, the young Lords received each his blooming bride from Mr. Belmont, who preſented his daughter Louiſa with a fortune of fifty thouſand pounds, and the ſum of ten thouſand to Julia, which made her fortune equal with her new ſiſter's.

Theſe

Theſe marriages were celebrated at Lady Melville's ſeat, in the country; where, after ſome time ſpent, our company took a tour to ſee Mr. Belmont's eſtates.

Nor was the cottage forgotten, but enlarged and fitted up, to receive our company of friends; Mrs. Belmont purpoſing to keep the anniverſary of her meeting Louiſa there.

Neither was Madame du Saint neglected; ſhe was informed of all that had paſt, by letter, with a promiſe of a ſpeedy viſit.

Nor muſt we forget Mr. Danvers, who, as ſoon as recovered from his wounds, ſet out on the tour of Europe; on his return from which, he was made happy with a very amiable lady.

Louiſa, now Lady Melville, by the means of Mrs. Maſters, found out her old nurſe, and ſettled a handſome annuity on her for life.

One houſe generally held our circle of friends, who were never ſo happy as when diſperſing univerſal good around.

The

——————" The ſeaſons thus,
" As ceaſeleſs round a jarring world they roll,
" Still find them happy; and conſenting Spring
" Sheds her own roſy garland on their heads:
" Till evening comes at laſt, ſerene and mild;
" When after the long vernal day of life,
" Enamour'd more, as more remembrance ſwells
" With many a proof of recollected love,
" Together down they ſink in ſocial ſleep;
" Together freed, their gentle ſpirits fly
" To ſcenes where love and bliſs immortal reign."

THE END.

c 4